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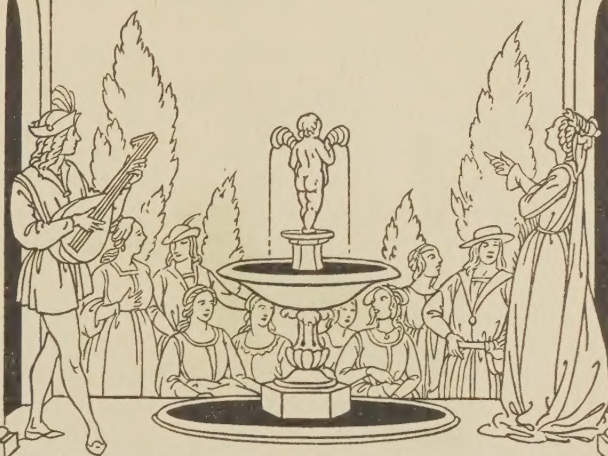
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THE DECAMERON OF GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

VOLUME TWO

THE DECAMERON OF
GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO
NEWLY TRANSLATED
FROM THE ITALIAN BY
FRANCES WINWAR WITH
AN INTRODUCTION BY
BURTON RASCOE



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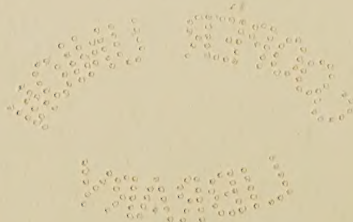
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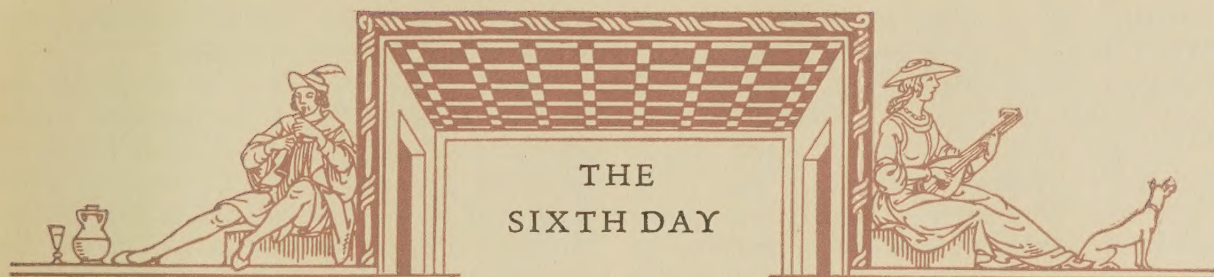
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THE SIXTH DAY

Now the moon had paled in the midst of the heavens and the radiance of the new-born day pervaded the world, when the queen, awakening from sleep, summoned her company. They took a leisurely walk over the dewy green-sward, leaving the pleasant knoll some distance behind, and whiled away the time in discussing the merits of the stories that had been told. Again and again, their laughter rang out as they recalled the various incidents of the stories, until, with the ascending sun, the heat of the day began to make itself felt. Then they thought it better to wend their way homeward. Accordingly, they retraced their steps, and returned to the palace.

The tables had already been set, and everything had been strewn with fragrant herbs and gay flowers; there, at the queen's bidding, they sat down to their meal, before the heat of the day grew more intense. Heartily they ate and with delight and merriment, and when it was over they sang a number of charmingly gay ditties. Then they dispersed to take a nap, play chess or indulge in a party of tables, while Dioneo and Fiammettasang of Troilus and Cressida.

The hour of their usual meeting arrived, and at the queen's summons they took their accustomed places about the fountain. The queen was about to request the first story, when something unexpected happened, and there was a frightful din, coming from the women and servants in the kitchen. Startled by the noise, they sent for the steward.

"Who is making all that noise, and what is the meaning of it?" they asked, whereupon he replied that Licisca and Tindaro were quarreling, but that he could not tell why, as he had been summoned in the midst of it, while attempting to quiet them.

The queen sent for the two culprits without delay, and when they were before her, "What is the reason of your boisterousness?" she asked.

Tindaro was about to offer an explanation, when Licisca, a matronly woman of rather overbearing disposition, turned upon him, still incensed by the heat of the argument, and cried: "Look at that fine example of manhood who dares to put in a word when I'm present! Let me have my say, if you don't mind, sir!" Then, addressing the queen, she said: "Madam, this fellow would like to teach me about Master John Thursday's wife, and as if I had never had dealings with her, he'd give me to understand that the first night John Thursday lay with her, Master Stock took possession of Black Hill by force and bloodshed. I said it wasn't so. He entered very quietly, on the contrary, and to the great delight of whoever was there. This fellow is such a donkey that he even thinks young wenches are silly enough to waste their precious years, awaiting the convenience of their fathers and brothers who, nine times out of ten, tarry from three to four years longer than they should, in marrying off the poor lasses! A jolly time they'd have if they really lingered so long on their maiden stems! Christ's faith—and I ought to know what I'm about, when I take such an oath—I haven't a single woman-friend who went to her husband with a whole maidenhead! Yes, and I could tell you, too, what pranks married women play on their husbands! And here this dunce wants to instruct me about women, as though I was born yesterday!"

During Licisca's speech, the women were shaken with laughter. More than a half-dozen times the queen had tried to silence her, but in vain. The woman did not cease until she had blurted out all that she had to say. At last, when she had delivered herself, the queen turned with a laugh to Dioneo.

"This is a matter for your judgment, Dioneo," said she. "When our stories are over for the day, you'll give the final dictum."

"Why, no, my lady," he answered promptly. "The judgment's passed without further hearing. Licisca is perfectly right. I believe things are as she describes them, and Tindaro's a dunce."

Licisca laughed with triumph at the decision, and said to Tindaro, "Didn't I tell you? Go in peace now. Why, did you imagine for a moment you knew more than Licisca? Why, you're hardly out of your diapers. Thank God, I've not wasted my life, no, not I!"

If the queen had not sternly silenced her and ordered her not to say another word, or stir up havoc under pain of a whipping, there would have been no time for anything but her chatter. But after the two culprits had been sent away, the queen asked Filomena to initiate the day's story-telling, whereupon she graciously began:

THE FIRST STORY

A GENTLEMAN offers to take Mistress Oretta on horseback with a story, but he tells it so poorly, that she begs to be allowed to go on foot again.

YOUNG damsels, just as on clear nights the stars are the adornment of heaven, and in the spring, the flowers and blossoming bushes are the glory of mead and slope, so, too, are witty conceits the embroidery of courtly manners and pleasing speech, especially since because of their brevity, they are more becoming to women than to men. Abundant speech in women has always been prejudicial to them. Whatever the reason, whether our minds are inferior, or whether the heavens reveal a singularly unpropitious countenance to our times, the fact remains that there is hardly a woman alive who can make a clever reply when necessary, or, for that matter, grasp the meaning of one when it is made—to our common shame be it said! But why should I continue? Pampinea has already said enough on that score. I want you to see, however, how charming a clever sally can be, in its proper place and season, and I shall be glad to tell you of how a lady courteously bade a man be silent.

Many of you here, I'm sure, must either have seen or heard of a gracious, witty and well-spoken lady who used to live in our city, not so long ago. She was a wonderful woman, whose name deserves

not to be left unspoken. She was none other than Mistress Oretta, the wife of Geri Spina.

Once, while in the country, she was going from one place to another, like us, for recreation, with a party of ladies and gentlemen, whom she had entertained that day at her home. The way was rather long, from the place they had left, to their destination which they had intended to reach on foot. So one of the gentlemen of her party said: "If you please, Mistress Oretta, I shall be happy to carry you a great part of the way on horseback, with one of the best stories in the world."

"By all means," she replied, "I beg you do so. I shall appreciate it very much."

The doughty knight, who was perhaps as poor a swordsman as a raconteur, plunged into his story, upon her encouragement. It was indeed a beautiful tale, but what with his repetition of the same word three or four times over, his recapitulations, his "No, no, that's not right," and his putting one name in place of another, he made a dreadful mess of it. Then, his diction was particularly bad, and entirely out of keeping with the circumstances, and the quality of his characters.

Mistress Oretta was impatient with the effort of listening, felt her heart sinking, and more than once she felt near fainting away or dying on the spot. At last, when she saw him hopelessly entangled in a maze of his own making, she said kindly, unable as she was to put up with the torment any longer: "This steed of yours goes too hard a pace, sir, so please set me on my feet again."

Fortunately, he was much keener in drawing inferences than in telling a story, and taking the hint good-humoredly, he turned the conversation to other things, leaving unfinished the story he had begun and fared with so badly.

THE SECOND STORY

CISTI the baker brings an indiscreet request to the attention of Messer Geri Spina, by a clever retort.

MISTRESS Oretta's wit was being highly applauded by everyone in the party, and by the meh, as well as the women, when the queen called upon Pampinea to continue.

Lovely ladies, she began, I find it hard to tell

which is the sinner in this respect, Nature, in housing a noble soul in a wretched exterior, or Fortune, in subjecting a body endowed with a lofty soul to a mean trade, as we see in the case of Cisti, our fellow-citizen, and many others besides. Let us take Cisti. He is a man of noble loftiness of mind, but Fortune made him a baker! Really, I'd lay the blame on Nature as well as Fortune, were I not convinced that Nature is extraordinarily prudent, and that Fortune has a thousand eyes, though fools insist on representing her as blind. I presume that both of them, like wise managers, probably do what mortals are often known to do, when, in uncertainty of the future, they bury their most precious treasures against a time of need, in the humblest corners of their houses, as the places least likely of suspicion. Then, when necessity arises, they bring them forth again, the dark hole having proved a surer hiding-place than a beautiful room would have provided. So it is with these two rulers of the world, who often conceal their rarest treasures in the obscurity of trades that are deemed the humblest, so that when they are revealed by necessity, their light may gleam the brighter.

The matter in which Cisti the baker revealed the truth of this by opening Geri Spina's eyes is slight enough. The talk of Mistress Oretta, his wife, brought it to my mind, and it will give me pleasure to tell you about it, in a very brief story.

Well then, you must know that once upon a time Pope Boniface, at whose court Messer Geri Spina was held in high esteem, sent a number of his distinguished ambassadors to Florence, on a mission of great importance. They took up their lodging at the house of this Messer Spina, and as he proceeded to take charge of the pope's affairs with them, they somehow or other had occasion to pass in front of Santa Maria Ughi, almost every morning, where Cisti the baker had his ovens and personally supervised his business. Although Fortune had given him a very humble trade, she had so prospered him in it, that he had accumulated considerable wealth; indeed, he had no wish to change his calling for any other, for he derived such a splendid livelihood from it, that among other luxuries he had the best wines, light and dark, that Florence or the whole province could boast of.

Now, when he observed Messer Spina and the

pope's ambassadors pass before his door every morning in the fiery heat, he thought he would be acting with great courtesy if he offered them some of his excellent white wine to drink. He reflected on his condition, however, and on Messer Geri's. It did not seem quite the proper thing for him to invite him; the invitation, he thought, must come from the gentleman himself, and he devised a way of leading him to it.

It was Cisti's custom always to dress in a white coat and spotless apron, which made him look more like a miller than a baker. Every morning, when he expected Messer Geri and the ambassadors to pass, he would have a brand new pail of sparkling, fresh water placed before his door, a little decanter of Bolognese pottery full of his best white wine, and two goblets so bright, they might have been made of silver. Then, sitting down comfortably, he waited for them to come by. No sooner did he catch sight of them, than, after gargling once or twice, he began tossing off this excellent wine of his, with such gusto that he would have made even a dead man yearn for it.

Once, Messer Spina observed this procedure, and then again, the next day. On the third, he could not refrain from calling out to him: "Well, well, Cisti! Is it good?"

Promptly Cisti jumped up and said: "Yes, indeed, sir! But I couldn't give you any idea of how good it is unless you drank some of it yourself!"

Whether the heat, or the unusual exertion, or perhaps the relish with which he had seen Cisti quaffing his wine had made Messer Spina thirsty, he turned to the ambassadors and said, smiling: "Gentlemen, I advise you all to taste some of this good man's wine. It may be so fine, that we'll surely be glad we did."

With the rest of the nobles, Messer Spina approached Cisti, who had a handsome bench brought out of his bakery, and begged them all to sit down. The gentlemen's servants then made ready to rinse the glasses, but Cisti stopped them. "No, my friends," said he. "Stand back and leave this business to me, for I'm as good at pouring wine as baking. And don't expect to taste a drop of it, either."

Rinsing out the four bright new beakers, he called for a pitcher of his best wine, and poured it

out handsomely for Messer Spina and his companions. They thought it the most delicious they had tasted in a long time, and told him so; therefore during the rest of their stay in Florence, Messer Spina came almost every morning with the gentlemen to toss off a pot.

Finally, the ambassadors' mission was accomplished, and the time came for them to take their departure. Accordingly, Messer Spina offered a magnificent farewell dinner in their honor, to which he invited a great number of the most important citizens of Florence. Among them he included Cisti, but on no condition could the baker be induced to accept, whereupon Messer Spina sent one of his servants to ask him for a flask of wine, sufficient to serve each guest a half-glassful with the first course. Somehow or other, the servant was full of spite, perhaps because he had never succeeded in tasting a drop of that wine, and he took along a huge flagon, the sight of which made Cisti exclaim, "Messer Spina is certainly not sending you to me, son."

The fellow insisted that such was the case, but when he could not get Cisti to give any other answer, he returned to his master and told him about it.

"Go back to Cisti and tell him I'm sending you to him, and to no one else," said Messer Spina, "and if he still gives you the same answer, then ask him to whom I'm sending you."

The servant did his errand, and again presented himself before the baker, saying: "Cisti, I assure you it's to you my master sends me."

"And I assure you, my son, it is not," insisted the baker.

"Well," said the other, "where is he sending me, then?"

"To the river Arno," replied Cisti.

The servant returned and repeated the new venture to Messer Spina, whose eyes were instantly opened.

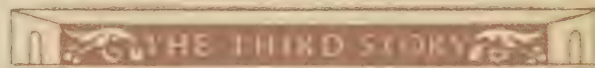
"Show me the flask you took there," he said. "Cisti was quite right," he added, shocked at the sight of it, and giving the fellow a sound scolding, he had him take a flask of more seemly proportions.

"Now I know he sent you to me," said Cisti when he saw it, and he filled it ungrudgingly.

Later that day, he had a small barrel of the same sort of wine brought carefully to the house of Messer Spina, and followed close behind himself.

"Sir," said he, when he had found his host, "I don't want you to believe for a moment that I was daunted by the huge flagon this morning. I thought perhaps you had forgotten what I had meant to convey to you these last few days by my small decanters—mainly that this is no wine for servants—so I wished to bring it to your attention to-day. Now as I'm not going to be your cellarer any longer, I've had it all brought here to you. From now on, enjoy it or do with it as you wish."

Messer Spina was very grateful for Cisti's gift. Then and there, he thanked him for it as best he could, and ever afterwards esteemed him a wise man and a dear friend.



NONNA de' Pulci silences the Bishop of Florence by a ready retort to his indecent remark.

AFTER Pampinea had finished her story, and Cisti's reply and generosity had received their share of everyone's praise, the queen was pleased to call on Lauretta to continue. Sweetly, she began:

Winsome ladies, first Filomena and now Pampinea struck the bull's eye, when they spoke of our meager talent and the beauty of ready replies. That there may be no further need for reiteration, I'd like to remind you, on that score, that such is the nature of repartée, that it should snap at the hearer, not like a dog, but rather like a sheep, for in the former instance, it would no longer be repartée, but insult. Now both Mistress Oretta's sally and Cisti's reply answer the proper requirements. In case a person snaps back like a cur, in reply to a remark of the same nature, I think he is not to be blamed as severely, as if he were to do so without provocation. It's a good thing, therefore, to bear in mind the proper occasion and person, as well as the time and place for playful banter. *À propos* of that, I'd like to tell you what happened to a churchman of ours who, through his carelessness, received as keen a thrust as he gave.

During the time Antonio D'Orso, a wise and virtuous prelate, was bishop of Florence, a Catalan worthy called Diego della Ratta, marshal of King Robert, emigrated there. Now this marshal, a remarkably handsome man and a gay blade with the

fair sex, was taken with a beautiful Florentine lady, a niece of the bishop's brother, and upon hearing that her husband, although he came of a noble family, had all the instincts of avarice and miserliness, he arranged to give him five-hundred florins in gold for the privilege of lying one night with his wife. That settled, the marshal had certain silver coins then common currency gilded to look like gold, and after lying with the man's wife, though sorely against her will, he presented them to her husband. The affair later became a byword in the town, heap- ing shame and scorn upon the miserable wittol's head. However, the bishop's brother, like the wise man he was, pretended to be perfectly ignorant of the whole sordid business.

Now the bishop and the marshal used to go about a great deal together, and on Saint John's day, while they were riding side by side along the course where the race for the pallium was being run, looking at the fair ladies, the bishop caught sight of a young woman, Nonna de' Pulci, Alessio Rinucci's cousin. All of you must have known her, I'm sure—she was carried off by the present plague. Well, at that time she was a lovely, quick-tongued, fearless girl, who had been married, shortly before, in Porta San Piero. The bishop pointed her out to the marshal, and then, when they were nearer, he called to the young woman, laying his hand on his companion's shoulder. "Look here, Nonna, what do you think of this fine beau? Do you think you could resist him?"

In these words Nonna heard an echo of something impugning her virtue, and felt they might lower her in the esteem of the many people about who had also heard them. Accordingly, not only to justify herself, but to give blow for blow, she retorted, quick as a flash, "My lord, he might not succeed in winning me, but at any rate, I'd first want to make sure that the money was good."

No sooner did the two men hear her reply, than they found that the cap fit them alike, the marshal, because of the ignoble affront he had inflicted on the niece of the bishop's own brother, and the bishop, because he had swallowed the insult to his kin. Without daring to exchange a look, they went away in silence and in shame, and said nothing more to Nonna that day.

So it was, that since the young woman had been seriously affronted, it was permissible for her to bite as harshly as she had been bitten.

THE FOURTH STORY

CHICHIBIO, Currado Gianfigliuzzi's cook, turns his master's wrath to laughter by a ready excuse, and avoids the punishment in store for him.

Now that Lauretta was silent, and Nonna had been showered with praise, the queen called on Neifile to continue, who began:

Though one's own witty ingenuity, amorous ladies, often inspires one with ready words and useful answers apt for the occasion, Fortune has been known to come to the rescue of people in the stress of fear, by prompting their tongues to sudden flashes that in their calmer moments they would never have been able to think of—and that's what I'd like to demonstrate by my story.

Currado Gianfigliuzzi, whom all of you must know, both by sight and hearsay, has always enjoyed the reputation of being a noble, generous and magnificent citizen, here in Florence. A follower of the knightly life, he is an assiduous sportsman. He is so fond of sports, in fact, that often his delight in hunting and hawking made him neglect his more important duties, for the immediate pleasure they afforded.

One day he brought down a crane near Peretola, with the help of one of his falcons, and finding the fowl fat and tender, he sent it to one of his competent cooks, Chichibio, a Venetian, with the injunction to roast it for supper, and prepare it as temptingly as possible.

Now Chichibio, who was as much of a greenhorn as he appeared, dressed the crane, and fixing it on the brazier, set to roasting it with all possible care. When it was nearly done to a delicious brown, and the smell of it as it turned upon the spit would have tempted the dead, a gossip of the neighborhood, called Brunetta, for whom Chichibio cherished a burning passion, came into the kitchen. The savor of the crane tickled her nostrils, and the moment she spied it, she coaxed and cajoled and begged Chichibio to give her a leg of it.

He answered with a song:

*"I shall not give it to thee, Brunetta,
I shall not give it to thee."*

Annoyed at his flippancy, she said to him, angrily: "I swear, Chichibio, unless you give me one of the drumsticks, you'll never have any joy of me, as long as I live."

In short, she used so many arguments, that finally Chichibio, to keep his lady from flying into a temper, tore off a leg of the crane, and gave it to her.

Presently, when the one-legged crane was set before Currado and some foreign guests of his, he stared at it in astonishment, and sending for Chichibio, asked him what had become of the missing leg. Glibly, the sly-tongued Venetian answered, "Why, master, cranes have only one leg and one drumstick."

Wrathfully, Currado cried: "What the devil are you saying about one leg and one drumstick? Do you imagine I've never seen any other cranes in my life?"

Nothing daunted, Chichibio replied: "It's exactly as I say, master, and I can show you how it is with live cranes, any time you say."

To spare the strangers who were dining with him further annoyance, Currado forbore discussing the matter, but said simply: "Since you say you'll show me that it's true in live cranes—a strange thing, the like of which I've never seen or heard in my life—I want to prove it for myself to-morrow morning, and then I'll be satisfied. But I warn you, on my oath, if it's other than you say, you shall be taught such a lesson, that you'll bear me in mind to your sorrow, to your dying day!"

The matter was closed for the night. The following morning at daybreak, Currado, whose anger was not diminished with sleep, arose, ready to burst with rage, and sent for his horses. Motioning Chichibio to mount a nag, he led him to a river, on the banks of which cranes congregated in the early morning. "Now," said he to him, "we'll find out who was in the wrong last night, you or I."

Seeing that his master still persisted in his anger, and that he must somehow redeem his lie, Chichibio, not knowing how to get out of his scrape, rode beside Currado, quaking with fear. Had he been able, he would have run away without thinking twice, but flight was out of the question; so he kept a strict look-out, and stared now ahead and now behind, and now on either side, in his fancy seeing

cranes everywhere; cranes, nothing but cranes, and standing on two legs.

However, on nearing the stream, he was the first to spy at least a dozen cranes on its banks, each teetering on one leg—a usual thing with them, when they sleep. Immediately, he pointed them out to Currado, saying: "Now there! You can see for yourself that I told you the truth about them last night, master. Cranes have only one leg and one drumstick. Look at 'em all standing there!"

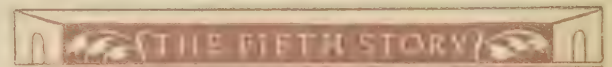
"Wait," said Currado, when he saw them, "and I'll prove to you that they have two." Approaching nearer the birds, he shouted "Ho! Ho!" whereupon, startled at the sound, the cranes produced their other leg, and after strutting a few paces, took to flight.

"There, now, what do you think of that, numbskull?" asked Currado, turning to Chichibio. "Are you convinced they have two legs?"

Chichibio, all in a fuddle, not knowing himself what prompted him, replied: "Yes, sir, I am. But you didn't shout *Ho! Ho!* to the crane last night, for if you had, it would have brought out the other leg and drumstick, like these fellows here!"

Currado was so delighted with the reply, that his rage turned to laughter and merriment. "You're quite right, Chichibio," he said. "I should have done that last night!"

And so it was that Chichibio got out of a bad scrape by a prompt and ludicrous reply, and patched up his difference with his master.



FORESE da Rabatta and Giotto the painter come together from Mugello and tease each other on their disreputable appearance.

THE women were quite tickled with Chichibio's reply, and as Neifile was silent, Pamfilo continued, at the queen's pleasure:

Dearest ladies, just as Fortune has sometimes been known to conceal a wealth of fine qualities under some humble craft—a truth demonstrated a short time ago by Pampinea—so likewise, marvelous genius may be hidden by Nature under the wretchedest of human exteriors, a fact that held true in the case of two of our citizens, about whom I am going to tell you a very short story.

One of these men, called Forese da Rabatta, was a dwarfed, mis-shapen man, with a face so flat and doggish that it would have been a fright even had it graced the notoriously ugly family of the Baronci. Yet this ugly little creature was so well versed in law, that many a brilliant man looked upon him as a veritable storehouse of civil learning. The other, whose name was Giotto, was so extraordinary a genius, that there was nothing Nature, the mother of all things, displays to us by the eternal revolution of the heavens, that he could not recreate with pencil, pen or brush so faithfully, that it hardly seemed a copy, but rather the thing itself. Indeed, mortal sight was often puzzled, face to face with his creations, and took the painted thing for the actual object. Well, as he brought to light again that art, which had lain buried through the mistaken notions of those who painted more to flatter the eye of the ignorant, than to satisfy the intellect of the connoisseur, he might well be called one of the luminaries of Florence's glory. And all the more deservedly, because despite his mastery over others, he bore his honors humbly, and would never consent to be called 'master'. Yes—but that title which he would not adopt, reflected all the more resplendent glory upon him, the more invidiously it was usurped by his disciples, or others who could not compare with him. However, although his genius was phenomenal, he was no better off in personal attractiveness than Messer Forese. But to my story:

You must know that both Messer Forese and Giotto owned property at Mugello, and one day, during the season when lords hold open-court, while Messer Forese, mounted on a disreputable-looking nag, was on his way back to Florence from visiting his estates, he came upon Giotto, returning from a similar errand, and no better mounted or equipped than himself.

Both of them, at the time of my story, were fairly old men, so retarding the pace of their nags, they went their way together, when suddenly an unexpected summer shower overtook them. With all the haste they could muster, they fled to take shelter in the hut of a laborer whom both knew; but after a while, as the rain seemed to show no signs of abating, and as they were anxious to get to Florence before sunset, they borrowed two old fustian cloaks

from the peasant for lack of anything better, and two hats, gnawed with age, and once more they proceeded toward the town.

Now when they had gone a while on their way, their clothes hanging limp with the wet, and all spattered and muddy from the continual splashing of their horses' hoofs (which certainly did not add distinction to their appearance) the sky began to clear, and the two, who had gone on in silence, struck up conversation anew.

Giotto was a very entertaining speaker, and as Messer Forese trotted on, listening to him, he could not help considering him from top to toe. The sight of him so disreputable, ill-dressed, and in that predicament, tickled his sense of humor, and without considering his own plight he laughed aloud, saying: "Ha! Ha! Giotto! If a stranger who had never cast eyes on you before, were suddenly to meet you in this condition, do you suppose he would take you to be the finest painter in the world, as indeed you are?"

"Perhaps he would," replied Giotto readily, "if when he saw you, he had the faintest suspicion that you had even learned your A B C."

Messer Forese no sooner heard Giotto's retort than he was aware of his mistake, and saw that he had been paid in his own coin.

THE SIXTH STORY

MICHELE Scalza, by proving to certain young men that the Baronci family is the oldest and best in the whole world, or Maremma, wins himself a supper.

THE women's laughter was still ringing, over Giotto's ready answer, when the queen requested Fiammetta to resume the story-telling.

Young ladies, she began, Pamfilo's mention of the Baronci, whom I daresay you don't know as well as he, recalled to my mind a story in which their distinguished ancestry is demonstrated. It does not depart from our topic for to-day, and therefore I'll tell it to you with the greatest pleasure.

Not so very long ago, there lived in our city a young spark called Michele Scalza, who was the jolliest, merriest scamp in the world. He had all the newest stories at the tip of his tongue, and there wasn't a roistering crew of Florentine youths that wasn't anxious to have him of their party.

One day, while he was with a group of friends at Mount Ughi, a debate arose as to which were the oldest and most aristocratic gentlefolk of Florence. "The Uberti," said some. "The Lamberti," maintained others, all declaring themselves for this or that family, as their fancy swayed them. Scalza laughed at them all. "Nonsense, gulls that you are!" he cried. "You don't know what you're talking about! The oldest and the bluest-blooded men, not only of Florence but of the whole world with Maremma thrown in, are the Baronci, as any man of sense, or any other will say, who knows them as I do. I repeat it—make no mistake about it!—the Baronci, your neighbors of Santa Maria Maggiore!"

The youths expected him to explain himself further, but when they heard what he said, they jeered at him and said, "You're trying to make fools of us. As though we didn't know the Baronci as well as you!"

"On my word, I'm not making fun of you, really," said Scalza. "I'm telling you nothing but what is so. If any one of you is willing to stake the winner and half a dozen merry fellows of his pick, to a supper, I'll take the bet, and gladly. I'll go even further: I'll accept the judgment of any umpire you select."

Then spoke up one of them, Neri Mannini, by name. "Well, I'm ready to try my luck at this supper," he said.

They decided upon Piero di Fiorentino, in whose home they were, to act as judge, and approaching him, followed by the rest of the merry crew, who were looking forward to seeing Scalza lose his bet, so they might later plague him about it, they told him all there was to be told. Piero, a prudent young gentleman, first listened to what Neri had to say, and then, turning to Scalza asked, "How will you be able to prove what you affirm?"

"How? Easily enough," replied Scalza. "I'll give you such convincing proofs, that not only you, but Neri here, who denies it, will confess I'm right."

"You know that the older the ancestry of people, the nobler they are, as all of us here were saying a short while ago. Now the Baronci are older in ancestry than any other family extant. Hence, they are nobler. When I prove to you how they come to be the oldest, I've no doubt I'll surely win the bet."

"You must know that the Baronci were made by the good Lord when He had scarcely learned to

draw, while the rest of us were manufactured later. You want to know how this is true? Simply compare the Baronci with other people. While all the rest have respectable-looking faces, properly proportioned, what is the case with the Baronci? There's one with a long, narrow mug, and another with a face as wide as a platter. Here's a fellow with a tremendously long nose, and one with a mere stump. Then again there is one with a chin that juts out and up, and a huge pair of jaws that would honor a donkey, and another with one eye larger than the other, or set farther down on his face—all of them looking like the caricatures children scrawl when they are just beginning to draw. You see, then, it's evident enough as I said before, that the good Lord made them when He was just learning, and therefore they're older than other people, and nobler."

Piero, the judge, Neri, who had staked the supper, and the rest of the gay youths, considered that things were really as Scalza claimed by his amusing argument, and amid peals of laughter, they declared him right. Yes, he had certainly won the supper, they agreed, and the Baronci were indeed the bluest-blooded and most anciently descended men extant, not only in Florence, but in the whole world, or even Maremma.

That's why Pamfilo was perfectly right when he said, describing the ugliness of Messer Forese's face, that it would have been a fright, even on a Baronci.

THE SEVENTH STORY

FILIPPA, called to judgment by her husband, on being found with a lover, avoids the penalty by a prompt and pleasing defense, and causes the law to be modified.

FIAMMETTA was silent, in the midst of the general merriment aroused by the droll argument Scalza had produced to elevate the Baronci above all others, when the queen charged Filostrato to continue.

Noble ladies, he began, it is an excellent thing to be well-spoken, but I think it is still more so, to have an apt tongue in the stress of necessity. Such was the case of a lady about whom I am going to tell you, who used hers so well, that she not only made her audience laugh with glee, but delivered herself from the toils of a shameful death.

Once upon a time, in the town of Prato, there used to be a law in force—as pernicious, indeed, as it was cruel, to the effect that any woman caught by her husband in the act of adultery with a lover, was to be burned alive, like any vulgar harlot who sold herself for money.

While this statute prevailed, a beautiful lady called Filippa, a devout worshiper of Cupid, was surprised in her bedroom one night by her husband, Rinaldo de' Pugliesi, in the arms of Lazzarino de' Guazzagliotri, a high-born Adonis of a youth of that city, whom she loved as the apple of her eye.

Burning with rage at the discovery, Rinaldo could scarcely forbear running upon them, and slaying them on the spot. Were it not for the misgivings he had for his own safety, if he gave vent to his wrath, he would have followed his impulse. However, he controlled his evil intent, but could not abandon his desire to demand of the town's statute, what it was unlawful for him to bring about—in other words, the death of his wife.

As he had no lack of evidence to prove Filippa's guilt, he brought charges against her, early in the morning, at daybreak, and without further deliberation, had her summoned before the court.

Now Filippa was a high-spirited woman, as all women are who truly love, and though many of her friends and relatives advised her against going, she resolved to appear before the magistrate, preferring a courageous death, by confessing the truth, to a shameful life of exile, by a cowardly flight that would have proved her unworthy of the lover in whose arms she had lain that night.

Accordingly, she presented herself before the provost, with a large following of men and women who urged her to deny the charges. She asked him firmly and without moving a muscle what he desired of her. The provost, seeing her so beautiful, courteous and so brave—as her words demonstrated—felt a certain pity stirring in his heart at the thought that she might confess a crime for which he would be obliged to sentence her to death to save his honor. But then, seeing he could not avoid cross-questioning her on the charge proffered against her, he said:

"Madam, here as you see, is Rinaldo, your husband, who is suing you on the grounds of finding you in the act of adultery with another man, and

who therefore demands that I sentence you to death for it, as the law, which is in force, requires. I cannot pass sentence if you do not confess your guilt with your own lips. Be careful of your answers, then, and tell me if what your husband charges you with is true."

Filippa, not at all daunted, replied in a very agreeable voice: "Your honor, it is true that Rinaldo is my husband, and that last night he found me in the arms of Lazzarino, where I had lain many another time, out of the great and true love I bear him. Far be it from me ever to deny it.

"As you are doubtless aware, laws should be equal for all, and should be made with the consent of those whom they affect. Such is not the case with this particular statute, which is stringent only with us poor women, who, after all, have it in our power to give pleasure to many more people than men ever could. Moreover, when this law was drawn up, not a single woman gave her consent or was so much as invited to give it. For all these reasons, it surely deserves to be considered reprehensible. If you insist upon enforcing it, not at the risk of my body, but of your immortal soul, you are at liberty to do so; but before you proceed to pass judgment, I beg you to grant me a small request. Simply ask my husband whether I have ever failed to yield myself to him entirely, whenever he chose, and as often as he pleased."

Without waiting for the magistrate to question him, Rinaldo immediately answered that there was no doubt Filippa had always granted him the joy of her body, at each and every request of his.

"That being the case, your honor," she went on, directly, "I'd like to ask him, since he has always had all he wanted of me and to his heart's content, what was I to do with all that was left over? Indeed, what am I to do with it? Throw it to the dogs? Isn't it far better to let it give enjoyment to some gentleman who loves me more than his life, than to let it go to waste or ruin?"

As it happened, the whole town had turned out to attend the sensational trial that involved a lady of such beauty and fame, and when the people heard her roguish question, they burst into a roar of laughter, shouting to a man that she was right and had spoken well.

That day, before court was adjourned, that harsh

statute was modified at the magistrate's suggestion to hold only for such women as made cuckolds of their husbands for love of money.

As for Rinaldo, he went away crest-fallen at his mad venture, while Filippa returned home victorious, feeling in her joy that she had, in a sense, been delivered from the flames.

THE EIGHTH STORY

Fresco advises his niece not to look at her own image if, as she said, she was annoyed by the sight of unpleasant people.

AT first, Filostrato's story pricked the hearts of the attentive ladies with a sting of shame, which was betrayed by the modest flush that rose to their cheeks, but as they listened further, exchanging furtive glances, they smiled archly and could scarcely contain their laughter. The moment he had made an end of it, however, the queen turned to Emilia, requesting her to continue. With a sigh, as if awakening from a revery, she began:

Since an obstinate thought, sweet ladies, has kept me from your midst for some time, I shall have to be satisfied with relating a much shorter story, in obedience to our queen's command, than I had intended. It concerns the inane haughtiness of a young woman, which her uncle's humorous retort should have corrected, had she had sense enough to understand it.

Well then, once upon a time there lived a certain Fresco da Celatico, who had a niece called Ciesca for short. The lass was comely enough of form and feature, though no angel-faced beauty, like many we've seen; but she had so exalted a notion of herself, and thought her lineage so distinguished, that she had formed the habit of finding fault with her fellow-beings—in short, with everything she happened to cast her eyes upon, regardless of her own shortcomings. She was more disagreeable, petulant and capricious than any woman alive, and never satisfied with anything. Moreover, she was so overburdened with pride, that it would have been unseemly, even had she sprung of the blood of French kings. Whenever she walked through the streets, she was so puffed up with the airs she assumed, that she did nothing but make wry faces, as if the presence of those she saw or passed on the way,

was offensive to her nostrils. But let's not mention any more of her unpleasant and annoying faults.

One day, she returned home suddenly from a walk, and sitting down near Fresco, with all kinds of wearisome affectations, she did nothing but snort and puff, until he could not help saying, "What's the matter, Ciesca? To-day's a holiday, still you've come back so early!"

"I've come back early, true enough," she replied, dripping with hypocrisy. "I verily believe there never were so many ugly and unpleasant men and women in this town as I saw to-day! I did not meet a solitary one whom I didn't loathe like the plague, and there's no mortal living who hates ugliness as much as I do. That's why I came home so soon, simply to avoid being afflicted by the sight of them!"

Fresco, who cordially hated his niece's snobbishness and affectation, thereupon replied, "Well, my dear, since you hate disagreeable things as much as you say, if you want to be happy, don't ever look at yourself in a mirror."

The girl, however, who was lighter-headed than a reed, although she held herself the peer of Solomon for wisdom, understood Fresco's real meaning no better than a dumb beast.

"But I do want to look at myself in a mirror, like other women," she said, foolishly.

Thus she remained in her stupidity, and may very well be no wiser to this day.

THE NINTH STORY

GUIDO Cavalcanti civilly rebukes certain Florentine gentlemen who had come upon him in his meditations.

THE queen saw that Emilia had finished her story, and as she was the only one left to speak but for the privileged Dioneo, she began:

Although, charming ladies, you've appropriated at least two stories to-day, one of which I had intended telling, I have still another left, that closes with a retort of deeper meaning, perhaps, than any that has yet been told.

You must know that in olden times, many a good, praiseworthy custom prevailed, none of which survives to-day; for the avarice which sprang up with the influx of wealth, caused them all to perish. Now among these customs, there was one that re-

quired gentlemen from all over Florence to form clubs of limited membership, open only to those well able to keep up with the expense. They held their meetings in various quarters of the city. According to the rules, each member took turns, one to-day, another to-morrow, in treating the whole party to dinner, to which they sometimes invited distinguished guests, who came to Florence from other towns, as well as gentlemen of their own city. Following the same tradition, they provided themselves with uniforms at least once a year, and on the most notable days, they rode together through the town. Sometimes they held jousts and tournaments, which was usually the case on important holidays, or whenever news of victory or any other good fortune gladdened the city.

Among these various clubs, there was one to which Betto Brunelleschi belonged. Many a time, both he and the rest of his boon-companions had done their best, and not without reason, to lure into their midst Guido, the son of Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti, a youth who, besides being one of the world's keenest logicians, and a great natural philosopher (for all of which the merry fellows did not care a rush), was a most gracious, accomplished, eloquent courtier, better versed in all that makes a gentleman than anyone of his day. Moreover, he was extremely wealthy, and for the asking, well knew how to feast and honor any man he thought worthy.

Messer Betto, however, had never succeeded in drawing him into his circle, whereupon he and his associates concluded that it was all because Guido was often too much taken up with philosophical speculation, and was aloof from the world of men. Indeed, since Guido was inclined to favor the tenets of the Epicureans, it was even whispered among the vulgar that all his speculation aimed to prove that there was no God.

One day, Guido left Orto San Michele and walked as far as San Giovanni along the Corso degli Adimari, a road which he was in the habit of frequenting. Great marble tombs, now in Santa Maria Reparata, were then sown about San Giovanni, and while Guido was standing between the porphyry columns of the church and those stones, with the door of San Giovanni shut fast behind him, Betto and his company came riding along the

square. Catching sight of Guido among these grave-stones, "Let's go and worry him," they said.

Spurring their horses, they went for him in play, like a charging squad, and before he was aware, they were upon him.

"Guido," they began, "why do you refuse to join our band? Tell us, what miracle will you have accomplished when you succeed in proving that there is no God?"

Seeing himself surrounded by them, Guido quietly replied, "Gentlemen, it is your privilege to tell me anything you wish in your own home." Then, resting his hand on one of those immense tombstones, he leapt over it nimbly, and landing on the other side, stole away and rid himself of them.

In the meantime, the men remained there quite aghast, looking at each other, calling him a crazy fellow and declaring that his answer was devoid of sense, as they were no more in their own homes in the cemetery than any other citizen, Guido included.

Betto, however, turned to them and said, "You are the crazy fellows if you fail to grasp his meaning. Civilly, and in a few words, he has made us swallow the worst reproof in the world. If you consider well, these tombs are the homes of the dead, for here they are laid to dwell. When he says we are in our homes, he wants to show us that all of us unlettered men and ignorant folk are worse than dead, compared with him and other learned doctors. That's why we're in our homes when we're here."

Then every man of them understood what Guido had meant to convey, and was ashamed. From that day on, they never worried him, and looked upon Betto as a gentleman and a scholar.



FRIAR Onion promises to show some peasants a feather from the wings of Angel Gabriel. Finding coals in its place, he claims they are of the brazier on which Saint Lawrence was roasted.

Now that each of the company had told a story, Dioneo knew his turn had come; so without waiting for a formal invitation, he began, when the rest, who were still praising Guido's pregnant answer, were silent:

Enchanting ladies, although it is my privilege

to speak on whatever strikes my fancy, to-day however, I don't intend to depart from the subject all of you have so ably treated. No, I shall follow in your footsteps, and show you how skilfully one of the little brothers of Saint Anthony applied his nimble wit to avoid the trap two young rogues had set at his feet. You won't be bored, I hope, if I enlarge somewhat upon the story to do it justice, for see, the sun is still high in the heavens.

Now, then! Certaldo, as you must have heard, is a hamlet of Val d'Elsa in our own section of the country, and though a tiny place, it was once inhabited by noble and prosperous gentlemen. It was a field of plentiful harvest for a certain little monk of the order of Saint Anthony, and for a long time he had made it a practice to visit it once a year, and garner the fruits which the simple of soul gave to him and the rest of his brotherhood. He was called Friar Onion, and was a very welcome figure there, perhaps no less by virtue of his name as for more spiritual reasons; for, as you know, the soil of that part of the country yields onions that are famous all over Tuscany. He was a meager little person, was Friar Onion, carrot-haired and jolly-faced, and the merriest scamp in the world. Moreover, despite the gaps in his education, he was so eloquent and witty a talker, that anyone who did not know him well might have thought him not only an accomplished rhetorician, but a Tully—even Quintilian himself! In fine, there was not a soul in the whole district for whose children he had not acted as godfather, or to whom he was not bound by ties of friendship and sympathy.

One fine Sunday morning in the month of August, he visited the town as usual, and when all the good gossips and gaffers had gathered from the villages round about to hear mass, he stepped forward at the proper moment and addressed them:

"Sisters and brethren, you all know it's customary, every year, to send an offering of your grain and oats to the poor folks of our master Saint Anthony. Some of you send a great deal, and some a few handfuls, according to your means and devotion, in return for the protection the blessed Saint Anthony gives your oxen and your asses, your pigs and your sheep. Over and above this, all of you, especially those who are registered in our holy company, pay

the little trifle you are scheduled to pay, once a year. It's for the collection of these dues that I've been sent among you by my chief, that is, by my master, the abbot, so—may the good Lord lay His blessing upon you!—when you hear the little bells tinkling this afternoon, come and meet me outside the church, where I'll preach to you as usual, and give you the Cross to kiss. There's one special attraction besides. Since I know you're all faithful followers of our master Saint Anthony, I'm going to reward you by a special favor, and show you a most wonderful holy relic, that I brought back myself from the Holy Land across the sea. It is a feather of the Angel Gabriel, my friends, one of those he dropped in the Virgin Mary's room, when he came to make the Annunciation to her in Nazareth."

Then, his message delivered, he was silent and continued with the mass.

While he was speaking, there happened to be among his numerous flock in the church two very clever rogues, one called Giovanni del Bragoniera and the other Biagio Pizzini. For some time they laughed together at this relic of Friar Onion's, but then, though they were his friends and boon-companions, they decided to play him a trick through this precious feather. That afternoon, they knew, the friar was to lunch with a friend of his at the hamlet. Accordingly, when they thought he must be at table, they slipped into the street and went to the hostelry where he had his lodgings, intending that while Biagio engaged Friar Onion's servant in conversation, Giovanni was to ransack the holy man's trappings in search of this feather, whatever it was, and take it away. The fun would come when the friar tried to explain the loss of his relic to the faithful.

Now Friar Onion had as servant, a fellow who had as many attributes as he had nicknames—Guccio the Whale was one, Guccio Greaser another, and some even called him Guccio the Pig. So mischievous and arrant a rascal was he, that even the notorious Lippo Topo couldn't have held a candle to him. Indeed, Friar Onion would sometimes expatiate upon his virtues, to his friends, and say, "I have a servant, my friends, who has nine such qualities, that if the least of them had been in Solomon, Aristotile or Seneca, it would have been enough to discount all their goodness, wisdom and piety. Think

what a marvel my man must be, who possesses the whole nine of them, and not an ounce of goodness, wisdom or piety!"

Sometimes, when he was asked what these nine qualities were, he would answer, enumerating them in doggerel: "What are they, you ask? I'll tell you. He is lazy, dirty, thoughtless; ill-bred, foul-tongued, careless; lazy, crack-brained, heedless—not to mention other little flaws which I had better suppress. But the funniest thing about him is that wherever he may be, he's forever anxious to get himself a wife and go into housekeeping, thinking he's so handsome and irresistible with his thick, greasy beard, that all the women who clap eyes on him immediately fall victim to his charms. Really, if he were left to his own devices, he'd lose his belt-strap, chasing after them. He's useful enough to me, though, to be truthful, for no matter how confidentially anybody wants to speak to me, Guccio must be there to get an earful. If I should ever be asked a question, he's so afraid I won't know how to answer, that he immediately blurts out Yes, or No, as he sees fit."

This was the gentleman Friar Onion had left at the inn, with the explicit command to see that nobody tampered with his belongings, especially his saddle-bags, that contained his most sacred possessions. But Guccio Greaser hankered more after the kitchen than does the nightingale after the green arbor, especially when he scented some jolly slut about, and as it was, he had made a find in mine host's kitchen. A fat, dumpy, clumsy wench she was, with a brace of paps the size of two garbage cans, and a sweaty, oily, sooty mug that was a match for the Baronci's. Upon making his discovery, Guccio had swooped down upon her in the kitchen like a vulture on his carrion, leaving Friar Onion's room and baggage under the custody of heaven. Though it was August, he sat hugging the hearth, and struck up conversation with my lady Nuta, telling her he was a gentleman, he was, and had piles and piles of money, all belonging to him in his own right, plus what he had for other folks, which was even more than he owned himself. Yes, and he could do lots of things, and had as clever a tongue in his head as anyone, the Lord knows. Indeed, regardless of his hood, that was larded with more grease than would have served to baste Altopascio's caldron, despite

his patched cloak, that hung in tatters and shone with sweat about the collar and armpits and was adorned, besides, with more spots and splashes than any plaid or India weave, unmindful of his shoes, all down at the heel and torn, and his yawning socks, he pursued her with a grandeur that would have done honor to a Sire de Chatillon. "I'll dress you up, and set you up fine, I will, girl," said he. "Indeed, I'll get you out of slavin' for others, and give you hopes of better fortune, even if you have no dowry or anything."

He made her many other magnificent promises: but for all his magnificent delivery, wind were his words, and wind they remained, like most of his undertakings.

Well, the two scamps found Guccio the Pig mighty busy courting Nuta, which gave them no little satisfaction, seeing that half their trouble was then over. No one stood in their way, so slipping into Friar Onion's room, the door of which was open, they made for his saddle-bags, which contained the precious feather. When they spread them open before them, they came upon a clumsy bundle of silk, inside of which they discovered a small box. They opened it quickly and found—a feather of a parrot's tail, the very feather, they were sure, that Friar Onion had promised to show his faithful at Certaldo.

In his day, it would have been easy for the friar to make the people believe his trumpery. The luxuries of the Orient had made but small headway into Tuscany, though since then, they have been introduced with a vengeance, to the ruin of all Italy. But if these eastern refinements were known anywhere in Italy, they were certainly unfamiliar to the people of that hamlet. Indeed, the primitive honesty of the ancients was still so much alive, that the inhabitants had never heard of parrots, much less set eyes on such creatures at all.

Now the youths, overjoyed at their find, spirited away the feather, and not to leave the case empty, filled it with a few coals, that lay in a corner of the room. Closing it again, and rearranging everything as before, they went away unperceived with their prize, all impatience to hear what Friar Onion would have to say, on finding the coals instead of the feather.

Meanwhile, the good folk on hearing that they

were to be shown a feather of the Angel Gabriel in the afternoon, betook themselves to their homes after mass. By the time they had had their dinner, and the information had passed from goodman to goodman and gossip to gossip, so vast a crowd had flocked to the hamlet to be shown this marvelous feather, that there wasn't room enough left to admit a fly. Friar Onion, too, had had a good meal, after which he took a short nap. On rising in the afternoon, and hearing the hubbub of the multitude of peasants swarming for a sight of the feather, he sent Guccio Greaser to fetch the bells and saddle-bags. It was a great struggle for the amorous fellow to wrench himself away from Nuta and the kitchen, but he went with the necessary paraphernalia to the place his master had indicated, puffing and panting mightily, for the gallons of water he had drunk had swelled his bowels considerably. Once at the church, he stationed himself in front of the door and set up a vigorous jangling of the bells. The parish folk had gathered to a man, whereupon Friar Onion, unaware that anything had been tampered with, plunged into his sermon, with many a covert hint of his own personal needs. Soon the time came for the unveiling of Angel Gabriel's feather. With a solemn voice, he began by intoning the service; then, after two torches had been lighted, he uncovered his head, carefully undid the silken wrapper, and produced the box. Before thinking of opening it, however, he delivered himself of a few words in praise of the Angel Gabriel and his relic, and then pulled up the lid of the coffer. It was full of coals. At the revelation, he did not dream of suspecting Guccio the Whale—the fellow was not clever enough to have thought of it; nor did he curse him for not preventing others from playing the trick. No, he cursed himself inwardly for committing the scape-grace to the care of his belongings, knowing him as he did to be negligent, disobedient, crack-brained and heedless. Outwardly, he did not even change color, however, but raising his face and his hands to heaven, exclaimed loud enough for everyone to hear: "Almighty God, may Thy might be praised forever!" after which, closing the casket and turning to the populace, he said:

"Sisters and brothers, you must know that while I was still a mere youth, I was sent by my superior to those far lands where the sun rises, and was ex-

pressly commissioned to look for the dispensations for making porcelain, which, though they're cheap enough to seal, are more useful to others than to us. Well, setting out on this enterprise, I left Venice and journeyed through the Borgo de' Greci. From there, I rode through the Kingdom of Algarve and Baldacca, until I came to Parione, out of which, not without a dry gullet, I arrived in Sardinia. But why should I mention all the lands I traveled? After I had passed the Strait of Saint George, I landed in Truffle and Buffle, great regions, both of them teeming with folk; from there I came to the land of Trumpery, where I found many of our brethren and monks of other orders, all of them going about freely and easily, avoiding annoyance for the good Lord's sake, and caring not a whit for other people's woes, provided their own gains were assured. No coin did they spend, but what was unminted.

"From this territory, I passed into the district of Abruzzi, where men and women clatter about the mountains on wooden pattens, and dress the pigs in the pigs' own gut-skins. Still farther, I came across people who carried bread in staves and wine in bags. Then, from those regions, I reached the mountains of the Baschi, where all the streams run perpendicularly. In short, I got entangled so far inland, that I traveled as far as India Pastinaca, where—and I swear to the truth of this by the gown I'm wearing—I even saw feathered creatures fly, a wonder too strange to be believed by those who have not seen it! But Maso del Saggio will support my statement—Maso, whom I found established as a powerful merchant there, cracking nuts and carrying on a retail business in the shells.

"However, since I couldn't find what I was looking for, and as from that point on it is only possible to travel by water, I retraced my steps and came to those holy lands where, in the summer of the year, stale bread is worth four pence a loaf and the warm can be had for nothing. It's here that I met the venerable Father Blamenotme Ifyouplease, the most worshipful patriarch of Jerusalem, who, out of respect for the gown of my master Saint Anthony's order, which I have always worn, insisted on showing me all the precious relics he had collected. What a wealth of them! There were so many, that if I were to enumerate them, I'd have to talk for days

before I reached the end of the tale! But I don't want to disappoint you, my friends, so I shall tell you about a few of them. First, he showed me the finger of the Holy Ghost, as perfect and solid as you please, a ringlet of the seraph who appeared to Saint Francis, and one of the fingernails of the cherubim. Yes, he also let me see a rib of the Verbum Caro Look-out-of-the-Window, and the clothes of the Holy Catholic Faith, a number of rays of the star that shone for the three Magi in the East, and a bottle containing the sweat shed by Saint Michael when he fought with the devil. Besides, he showed me the jawbone of Saint Lazarus' Death, and many, many other wonderful things. Well, after that, because I told him a lot of things gratuitously in our dialect, about the slopes of Mount Moretto, and recited to him a few chapters of the Caprezio, which he had long been seeking, high and low, he divided his holy relics with me. He gave me one of the teeth of the Holy Cross, an echo of the bells of Solomon's temple, shut up in a tiny bottle, the feather of the Angel Gabriel which I've already told you about, and one of the clods of Saint Gerard of Villa Magna. That relic, however, I presented to Gerard of Bonsi in Florence a little while ago, for his great devotion to that saint. Among other things, the patriarch also gave me some of the coals on which the blessed martyr Saint Lawrence was roasted, and all of these treasures I faithfully brought back with me. In fact, I have them, each and every one.

"Now, to tell the truth, I must inform you that my superior never allowed me to display them, until he had made sure whether they were the real article or not. Recently, because of certain miracles that have been performed by their virtue, and because of some certificates sent by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, he's been convinced of their authenticity, and has given me permission to exhibit them. However, in my nervousness over entrusting them to others, I always carry them about with me—the feather of the Angel Gabriel, in a box by itself, so that it won't be ruffled, and the coals that roasted Saint Lawrence in another. Now these two boxes are so much alike, that I've often mistaken one for the other, which is now the case, for thinking I had brought you the casket containing the feather, I find it's the one that holds the coals.

"I'm convinced it was no error that created the confusion. Indeed, I verily believe it was the manifest will of God, that guided my hand to the coals, for now that I think of it, the feast of Saint Lawrence will be around in two days. Yes, it was the Lord's will. He intended me to show you the coals on which the blessed martyr was roasted, that I might rekindle in your souls the devotion you ought to feel for that saint. Therefore, it was not the feather He let me take, as I had intended, but the blessed coals, quenched by the agonized sweat of that holiest of bodies. Take off your hats now, O my blessed children, as you approach to gaze upon these coals. But first, I'd like you to know that whoever has the sign of the cross marked on him by one of these coals, may rest easy all through the year that no fire will touch him, but he'll feel the sting of it."

His harangue over, he intoned a *laud* in honor of Saint Lawrence and opened the box, revealing the coals to the throng. Awed at the wonder of them, the sheepish multitude stared wide-eyed at the lumps, and flocked about Friar Onion, begging him, for a more generous consideration than usual, to mark them with the relics. Obliging, the friar took the coals in his hand, and began scratching the biggest crosses he could on the men's white shirts and jerkins and the women's veils, reassuring them the while that though the lumps were used up in the marking, they always grew again in the box, as he had often had occasion to observe.

In this fashion, he decorated the good folks of Certaldo, much to his own advantage, and so with nimble cunning he played a prank on those who had sought to embarrass him by stealing his feather. As for the two rogues, they had been present at his sermon. So amused were they at his novel and far-fetched expedient, and at the style of his harangue, that they laughed almost to the point of lock-jaw. But later, when the crowd had dispersed, they hilariously confessed to him what they had done, and gave him back his feather, which profited him as much the following year, as the lumps of coal had done that day.

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This last story had roused the whole band to irrepressible good spirits, and all of them were nearly

in stitches laughing at Friar Onion, especially at his pilgrimage and the extraordinary relics he'd seen and brought back with him. Finally, the queen, seeing the story was over, and her rule as well, stood up, and taking the crown from her head laid it laughingly on Dioneo's, saying, "It's about time, Dioneo, you learned a little of the responsibility of having women in your charge, to rule and guide. Be king, then, and see that you rule us so well, that we'll have reason in the end to be glad of our choice!"

Accepting the crown, Dioneo replied laughing, "I'm sure you've seen many a king of the chess-board who was much more competent than I could ever be. But still, if you render me the obedience a king requires, I have it in me to give you some real pleasure, by a sport without which no merry-making can be called complete. But enough of this banter. I shall govern you as best I may."

He sent for the steward, according to precedent, ordered what was to be done while his rule lasted, and then said, "Virtuous ladies, we have told so many kinds of stories concerning human endeavor and the various shifts of fortune, that if Mistress Licisca had not a little while ago furnished me with the theme for to-morrow's narratives, by her chatter, I'm afraid I should have had a hard nut to crack in that respect. As you heard for yourselves, she said she hadn't a single neighbor who had gone to her husband with a whole maidenhead, and added that she knew all sorts of pranks married women play upon their mates. We'll set aside the first part, which after all belongs to adolescence, but I think the second should prove very entertaining matter for discussion. For to-morrow, then, since Mistress Licisca has started the ball rolling, I'd like you to tell of *the tricks women have played upon their husbands, either for love or in self-defense, with or without the poor fellows' knowledge.*"

Some of the ladies took exception to the theme as hardly proper for them to treat, and begged the king to change it, but he replied, "I know what I have asked you to do, dear ladies, as well as you do, and I'll not be swerved from it by what you would have me understand, for the times are such that, provided men and women take care not to tread on the toes of decency, all freedom is allowed. Don't you know that because of the evil days we've

fallen upon, judges have left their benches, that divine as well as human laws are dumb, and that we are all given the maximum license to preserve our lives? Well, then, if you give your virtue a little more lee-way in speech—not for the purpose of following it up with immodest actions, but purely to afford innocent pleasure to yourselves and others—I don't see what grounds for blame could possibly be adduced against you in the future. What's more, our little band has been exemplary in behavior from the first day to this, and I don't see how anything we have said so far, could have cast a blot upon it—a record we'll maintain to the very end, with the help of God. Besides, what man is there who doesn't know your virtue? Why, neither our merry jests, nor even the terror of death, I am certain, could succeed in undermining it! To be frank, if anyone were to learn that you avoided speaking about such trifles, out of squeamishness, he would be inclined to think the cap fit you, and therefore you did not care to discuss the matter. Moreover, you would be paying me a fine compliment, if, after I obeyed you, you insisted on dictating to me, now that you've made me king, and refused to speak on the subject I've assigned! Come, away with this prudery, more appropriate to evil minds than to yours! Think of some fine story to tell, and good luck to you!"

Convinced by his arguments, the women agreed to comply, whereupon the king gave them all leave to do as they wished until supper-time. The sun was still high in the sky, for the story-telling had not taken up much time, and when Dioneo had settled down to a chess-game at the boards with the other youths, Elisa, calling all the women aside, said:

"From the first moment we came here, I've just been dying to take you to a lovely spot near by, where I don't suppose any of you has ever been—the Vale of the Ladies, it's called. I haven't had the opportunity to take you there until to-day, with the sun still high, so if you'd care to come, I haven't the least doubt you'll be glad you did so."

The girls replied they were ready; therefore, sending for one of their maid-servants, without letting the young men know of their escapade, they set out on their way. They had scarcely walked a mile, when they came to the Vale of the Ladies, which they reached through a narrow path bordered on

one side by a crystalline brook. It was so enchanting a spot, and so refreshing, especially then, at the height of the hot season, that a more beautiful locality could not have been imagined.

From what one of them later told me, the plain in the midst of the valley was as round as though it had been drawn with a compass, though it was obviously nature's handiwork, and not art's, measuring perhaps a little more than half a mile in circumference, and circled by six not too lofty hills, on the crests of which palaces built on the style of handsome manors could be discerned. The hillsides sloped gently down to the plain, much like the ordered descent of tiers in a theatre, one after the other, from the loftiest to the lowmost, in ever-narrowing circles. Of these slopes, the southern face was covered with vines, olive, almond, cherry and fig-trees, and all kinds of fruit-bearing growths, which left no patch of the fertile earth bare. The sides that faced the constellation of the Plow, on the other hand, were all overgrown with scrub-oak and ash-trees, and other evergreens as flourishing and upright as could be. As for the plain itself, it had no means of approach except by the way the young women had entered it. Fir-trees, cypresses, laurels and various species of pines grew there in great abundance, all of them so well-formed and artistically arranged that one might have thought expert landscape gardeners had planted them. Little or no sun, even at its highest, ever filtered through the thick growth to the ground beneath—a meadow of the most delicate grass, dotted over with crimson flowers and blossoms of many hues. But above these attractions, and affording as keen a pleasure, was a streamlet flowing down the valley, between two of the hills, rushing over the cliffs of living rock, and babbling, on its way, a song delightful to the ear. While it splashed and bubbled, it looked, from the distance, as though jets of quick-silver were leaping and bursting into misty spray at some hidden pressure. Then, as it made its way to the little plain, it became a handsome canal, through which it flowed with a rush to the center, where it formed a miniature reservoir, like the fish-pools we often see in the gardens of city-dwellers. The water in the lake rose no higher than a man's breast, and it was so sparklingly clear, that the fine gravel at the bottom could have been

counted, grain by grain, if one had had the leisure to do it. But it was not only the sandy bottom that shone clearly through the water, for many gleaming fish could be seen darting to and fro, with a liveliness that was not only a delight, but a wonder to behold. No embankment enclosed the lake, but the natural soil of the meadow, that thrived lush and more deeply green because of the moisture. Where the water overflowed its banks, it was received into another canal, through which it left the valley and wimpled downward to the low-lying plains.

It was to this spot that the young women came. Full of delight and appreciation, they drank in everything with their eyes, extolling the beauty that surrounded them. The heat was overpowering; the little lake was before them, beckoning. There was no fear of being spied upon. Why not bathe together?

Sending their maid to watch for a chance passerby, on the narrow path that led into the plain, and give the alarm in case of danger, all seven took off their clothes and dipped into the water, which concealed their snow-white bodies no more than thin glass could hide the flush of a vermeil rose. No cloud troubled the clearness of the lake while they were in it, chasing the fish hither and thither as best they could, seeking to catch them in their hands as the frightened creatures darted madly about for a place of shelter. A few were captured in the sport. After the girls had played in the water a while longer, they rose out of it and dressed once more. It would have been impossible for them to lavish more praise upon the glorious spot than they already had, and thinking it about time to return home, they started back at an easy pace, talking over its many attractions.

It was still early when they reached the palace, to find the youths engrossed in their game, as they had left them.

"We've outwitted you to-day," Pampinea called to them, laughing.

"What!" cried Dioneo. "Do you act first, and then tell?"

"Exactly so, sir!" she replied, and told him at greater length where they had come from, what the place was like, and how far off, omitting no detail of their exploits.

The king was most anxious to see the spot after the glorious description, and ordered supper to be

served immediately. No sooner was it done away with, to their mutual relish, than the three youths and their valets left the women behind, and made for the plain. It was the most enchanting place they had ever seen, they agreed, as they examined its every aspect, for none of them had ever been there before. Then, after bathing in the lake, they dressed and returned home in the gradually approaching darkness, to find the women gayly dancing a round to a song Fiammetta was singing. In the silence that followed, the youths waxed eloquent in their praise of the Vale of the Ladies, each and every one agreeing on its beauties. Thereupon the king, sending for the steward, ordered the dinner to be prepared there the following day, and a few beds set up, in case any of them wished to rest in the noon-day heat, or take a nap, and then sent for lights, wine and sweets. When all had taken some refreshment, he requested them to make ready for the dancing. Pamfilo, at his wishes, took the lead. Then, turning to Elisa, the king said gallantly: "Lovely lady, to-day you honored me with the crown, and to-night it is my desire to let the honor of singing fall upon you. Sing, then, whatever is most to your liking!"

Smiling, Elisa replied, "At your command, my lord," and with a sweet, gentle voice began:

"O Love, if from your clutches I could gain
My liberty, no more
Would other hook seize hold of me again!

I was a maiden, when I joined your fray,
Thinking it sweetest joy and peace all-high;
And every weapon did I, trusting, lay
Upon the ground, so confident was I
Of glory. But, false tyrant, you did lie

Cunning in wait, and tore
Armored against me, with all might and main!

Then chained and fettered you delivered me
To him who for my death was surely born;
With bitter tears I wailed my lot, yet he
Received me, captive. With such mighty scorn
And crude he wields his rod, that though I mourn
And pine with weeping sore,
Nothing can move him—tears, nor moans,
nor pain!

All my entreaties the wind bears to him,
But he heeds nothing, neither plaint nor sigh;
And every hour my torment grows more grim—
Life is a burden, yet I cannot die.
Ah, Love, have mercy on my agony.
Do what I can't—restore
Him to my power, fettered in your chain!

If this you will not do, I beg you tear
The links that of my hope I welded fast!
Ah, I implore you, Love, fulfil my prayer,
For if you do, I trust to be at last
When all my rue behind me I have cast,
Beautiful as of yore,
And decked with flowers white and red again!"

A pitiful, deep-drawn sigh, and Elisa ended her song. Though they were all perplexed at the words, no one could guess what had given her cause to sing in that strain. The king, however, was in high spirits, and summoning Tindaro, had him bring his bag-pipes, to the tune of which they danced many a merry brawl, until a good part of the night had sped, when he ordered all his subjects to retire.



NOT a star was left in the eastern sky, except the solitary one we know as Lucifer, which still glimmered in the whitening dawn, when the steward arose and started out with a plentiful supply of provisions for the Vale of the Ladies, in order to get everything ready, in obedience to his master's orders. Not long after, the king, awakened by the noise and trampling of the caravan and its beasts, also arose and ordered the rest of the young men and women to be roused as well.

The sun's rays had already pierced the mists as they started on their way, accompanied by the trilling of nightingales and other feathered songsters. Never had they seemed to sing so gayly, or so persistently, as on that morning. As far as the Vale of the Ladies the birds caroled for them, and flocks of others greeted them there with song, as though rejoicing at their coming.

Once more, the little company wandered about the valley, taking stock of everything, from one extremity to the other. If anything, it seemed even more enchanting then than before, with the light of early morning forming an even fitter setting for its beauty. Presently, they breakfasted on dainties and wine, and that the birds might not outdo them, they, too, raised their voices in melody, which was re-echoed by the resounding vale, song for song, while all the tree-musicians, unwilling to be defeated, added sweet cadences and trills of their own.

Dinner-hour soon came. Along the lake's border the tables were set, under flowery arbors and trees splendid with foliage. There, at the king's pleasure, they took their places, watching as they ate, the fish sporting in great number in the transparent water, which afforded the company matter for conversation, as well as visual delight. The dinner over, and the tables and viands removed from sight, once again they burst into song, more heartily than before.

Beds had already been set up in various nooks about the valley. Indeed, the discreet steward had even had the foresight to screen them with French netting and canopies, behind which, if any chose, they might take their noon-day nap when the king dismissed them.

Finally, after they had all rested, and the hour came to gather again for their story-telling, the king had carpets spread upon the grass, not far from the spot where they had had their dinner, and there, by the lake's brink, they sat down.

"You begin," said the king to Emilia, who, smiling happily, said:



GIANNI Lotteringhi hears a knock at his door in the dead of night, and rouses his wife, who makes him believe it a ghost. They proceed to exorcise it, by a certain charm, and the knocking ceases.

MY lord, I should have been very much obliged had you seen fit to give someone else the privilege of starting the entertaining subject assigned us for to-day. But since you have laid upon me the responsibility of inspiring the other ladies with confidence, I shall willingly obey you. Indeed, dearest ladies, I shall even do my best to tell you something that may stand you in good stead in the future. For if you women are as great cowards as I, especially concerning ghosts—though the Lord knows, I've no idea what they are, or was ever able to find anyone to explain their nature, in spite of the fact that we're all equally in terror of them—you'd better pay attention to my story. You'll learn a potent and pious charm from it, which will be very useful to you, in case a ghost ever comes upon you and you wish to chase it away.

Once upon a time, there lived in the San Bran-

cazio quarter of Florence, a wool-carder by the name of Gianni Lotteringhi, a man much more successful in his craft than his wisdom in other matters would indicate. However, despite his rather feeble intellect, amounting almost to simplicity, he was often elected president of the singers in Santa Maria Novella, with the power to dictate the laws of their society, and was also frequently entrusted with similar petty honors, which gave him quite a lofty opinion of himself. All this was due to the generous allowances which he, in his rôle of well-to-do citizen, made to the monks, who, in exchange for the gowns and socks and scapularies that were often obtained from him by one or another of them, taught him all kinds of useful prayers. The *Our Father*, in the vulgar tongue, was among them, and the canticle of Saint Alexis, the lament of Saint Bernard, the laud of Madam Matilda, and similar nonsense, by which he set great store, and chanted very religiously, for the good of his soul.

Now this simpleton had married a most handsome and charming wife, by the name of Tessa, a daughter of Mannuccio dalla Cuculia, and a canny, clever woman she was, too. As she was in love with Federigo di Neri Pegolotti, a fine young lusty spark who was as much taken with her as she with him, and as she knew what sort of numbskull she had to deal with in her husband, she managed, with the help of one of her maids, to have her lover visit her at a pleasant country-cottage of Gianni's at Camerata, where she was wont to spend the entire summer-season. There Gianni would come of an evening to join her at supper and spend the night, and the morning after he would return to his shop, or perhaps to his choir-singers.

Federigo, who was dying to be with Tessa, took the first opportunity that offered itself, on a certain day which she had specified, and toward dusk he went up into the country. Gianni did not arrive that night. Very comfortably, therefore, and with exceeding pleasure, he supped and lodged with the lady, and as she lay in his arms that night, she taught him no less than half a dozen of her husband's lauds. Now since neither Tessa nor Federigo wished this first reunion of theirs to be their last, they struck upon a device, by which he might come to Camerata, without requiring the maid to come and fetch

him. It was very simple. Every day, whenever he had to pass back and forth on his way to his summer-house, which was somewhat farther up-country, he was to keep a sharp watch for a certain pole in a vineyard beside her house. An ass' skull would be on that pole. Whenever Federigo saw its jawbones pointing toward Florence, he was to come to her after dark, without fail and in all confidence; if he did not find the door open, he was to knock softly three times, and she would let him in. But whenever he saw the snout of the skull turned toward Fiesole, he was to stay away, for it meant that Gianni would be there. Following this procedure, they came together on more than one enjoyable occasion.

Now it happened one night, that while Federigo was expected to supper at Mistress Tessa's, and she had had two juicy fat capons prepared for the meal, Gianni, who was the last person she was thinking of, surprised her, by coming at an unusually late hour. She was as disappointed as could be, but nevertheless, after she had partaken with him of a bit of salt-meat that she had cooked on the side, she had her maid wrap the two succulent capons in a table-cloth, together with a goodly number of new-laid eggs and a flask of the best wine, and carry them all to an adjoining garden, where she had often dined with Federigo, and where it was possible to go without passing through the house.

"Lay them at the foot of the peach-tree by the meadow," she enjoined her. But she was so cross, that she forgot to tell the girl to wait until Federigo came, warn him that Gianni was home, and ask him to take the food away from the garden.

Not long after, when she and Gianni had barely laid their heads on their pillows, and the maid had also gone to bed, up came Federigo and gave one cautious tap at the door. Immediately, Gianni heard it, for the door was very near the bedroom, and so did Tessa, but she pretended to be sound asleep, to afford her husband no grounds for suspicion. A little later, Federigo tapped a second time, whereupon Gianni was filled with amazement; and giving his wife a little pinch, he whispered: "Tessa, do you hear what I hear? I think there must be somebody knocking at our door."

The woman, who had heard the tap far better than he, made a pretense of starting up from sleep.

"What's that?" she cried. "What did you say?"

"I said," repeated Gianni, "that somebody must be knocking at the door."

"Knocking?" said Tessa. "God help us, Gianni, my dear, and don't you know what it is? It's a ghost that's been scaring me out of my wits these last few nights. And what a scare! I was so terrified, that the moment I heard it I thrust my head under the bedclothes, and didn't venture to poke it out again until broad-daylight."

Then spoke up Gianni, "Come, come, woman! Don't be frightened in that case, for I said the *Te Lucis* and the *Intemerata* just before, when we went to bed, and a lot of other holy prayers. I even made the sign of the cross on the bed, up and down, and from side to side, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, so we needn't be afraid, for it doesn't matter how powerful a ghost it is, it can't possibly do us any harm."

Now Tessa, worried that Federigo might perhaps suspect her of being up to a trick, and so be angry with her, made up her mind to get up at any cost, and let him know somehow that Gianni was there.

"That's all well and good, as far as you're concerned," she said to her husband. "You have your own prayers to save you. But as for me, I'll not feel safe or out of harm's way, until we've charmed the ghost away, now that you're here."

"So! And how is it charmed away?" he asked.

"I know how very well," said his wife. "The day before yesterday, when I went to Fiesole to attend the Pardon, one of those lady recluses—the holiest and most pious creature you could ever hope to lay eyes on, Gianni, my dear—taught me a most wonderful holy-prayer, when she saw me so scared. She told me that she had used it herself many times before she became a nun, and that it had always helped her. God knows, I'd never have had spunk enough to try it out myself, but since you're here, we may as well try to charm the ghost away."

Gianni said he was willing, whereupon both of them got up and tip-toed cautiously toward the door, behind which Federigo was still waiting, his mind already darkened with suspicion. Once there, Tessa said to Gianni, "Now you get ready to spit when I tell you to."

"All right," he said.

Accordingly, she commenced the charm, saying, "Ghost, O Ghost, that fly by night, Stiff-tailed you came, stiff-tailed take flight. Go to the garden, to the foot of the big peach-tree, and there you will find a basted, twice-basted one, and a hundred droppings of my setting-hen. Put your mouth to the flask and go away, and do no harm to me or my Gianni, I pray." So saying, she turned to her husband. "Spit, Gianni," she said; and Gianni spat.

Outside, Federigo, who heard everything that was going on, and whose jealousy had been dispelled, was almost dying with controlled laughter, despite his disappointment, and with every spitting of Gianni's, he said in an undertone, "If you'd only spit out your teeth!"

As for Tessa, after she had repeated the exorcism over the ghost three times, she returned to bed, and Gianni with her.

Now Federigo, who had expected to be supping with his mistress, had not had a bite to eat, and therefore he was not slow to understand the words of her spell. Going into the garden, he found the two capons, the wine and the eggs at the foot of the large peach-tree, and carrying them home with him, he supped comfortably and well. Later, when he visited his lady on other occasions, they had many a good laugh together over the charm.

Some people maintain that Mistress Tessa had really turned the ass' skull toward Fiesole, but that a laborer, who happened to be passing through the vineyard, had hit it a blow with his stick, making it whirl round and round until, as it stopped, it remained with its nose facing Florence. As a result, Federigo, believing he had been summoned, had come to visit his mistress, who had recited this version of the spell:

"Ghostie, Ghostie, go away.
I did not turn the skull to-day,
Another did it, blast his hide—
I'm here with Gianni by my side."

Then he had gone away, and remained with an empty stomach and no bed to lie on. A neighbor of mine, however, an ancient old soul, informs me that, from what she learned about it when she was a girl, both accounts are true, except that the second version did not happen to Gianni Lotteringhi, but

to a man by the name of Gianni di Nello, who used to live at Porta San Piero, and was as much of a booby as Lotteringhi. Therefore, dear ladies, it's up to you to choose whichever incantation you prefer, unless you'd like to have both. They're most effective in such cases as the one you've just heard. Learn them, then, for they might still stand you in good stead.



PERONELLA conceals her lover in a cask, when her husband returns home unexpectedly. On his telling her that he has sold the cask, she replies she had already struck a good bargain on it, with the man who had gone into it, to see whether it was sound. The lover promptly jumps out, makes Peronella's husband scrape the cask clean, and then has him deliver it to his house.

EMILIA'S story was received with peals of laughter, and the incantation pronounced by one and all, most efficient and pious. When the story came to an end, however, the king commanded Filostrato to continue.

Dearest ladies, he began, so numerous are the tricks which men, and especially husbands, play upon you, that whenever a woman succeeds in paying her mate back in his own coin, you should not only rejoice at the event, and be delighted when it comes to your notice, but you must make it your business to spread the news of it everywhere, so men may realize that though they're mighty clever, women are a pretty good match for them. After all, it could only be turned to your account, for when a man knows he's not dealing with a fool, he's not so ready to cheat and deceive. Who can doubt but that when all we say to-day comes to the knowledge of men, it may be quite instrumental in curbing their cozening propensity, when they realize that if you wish, you can give as good as you receive? It's my intention, therefore, to tell you the prank a clever, though low-born young woman played on her husband, through a sudden flash of inspiration in order to get herself out of a scrape.

Not so long ago, in the city of Naples, there lived a poor fellow who married a good-looking chit of a girl called Peronella. He was a mason by trade, and by dint of his work and the spinning she took in, they eked out a meager livelihood, and

managed to keep the wolf from the door. It so happened that a gay young blade spied the jolly Peronella one day, and was so pleased with what he saw, that he fell in love with her, and contrived somehow or other to get sufficiently into her graces to become her friend. Accordingly, the better to manage their rendez-vous, they devised a plan.

It was the custom of Peronella's husband to rise early, either to work or look for a job. It was agreed between the lovers, therefore, that the gallant should take his station somewhere in the neighborhood, whence he could see the husband take his leave, and the moment the mason was gone, he was to slip into Peronella's house, shielded by the solitude of the street, which was called Avorio. And so they met on many occasions.

On a certain morning, however, after the honest fellow had gone out and Giannello Stringario—for such was the lover's name—had entered his house to stay with Peronella, the husband unexpectedly returned, though he seldom came back until sundown. Finding the door locked from within, he knocked, and began saying to himself, "Your Name be praised forever, O Lord! Though You gave me poverty for my lot, at least You consoled me by giving me a virtuous young woman for my wife. Look You how quickly she bolted the door from within, the moment I stepped out of the house, so nobody could get in to bother her!"

Meanwhile Peronella, who knew from the knock that her husband was at the door, whispered, "Good heavens, Giannello! This is the end of me! Here's my husband—the devil take him!—popping in upon us, and I can't for the life of me understand it, for he never came back at this hour before! Perhaps he saw you coming in! Whatever it is, get into this cask, for God's sake, and I'll go open for him. Let's see what he means by coming home so early!"

Giannello quickly scrambled into the cask, while Peronella went to the door to let in her husband. Scowling angrily, she greeted him with, "What do you mean by coming home so early this morning? If I'm not mistaken, you're none too anxious to work to-day, coming back like that, with your tools in your hands! What do you expect we'll live on, if you keep this up? Where's our next loaf of bread coming from, eh? Do you think for a moment I'll

let you pawn my petticoats, and my other miserable little rags? Here I wear my fingers to the bone, day and night, to keep our lamp provided with oil, and you—ah, husband! husband! There's not a housewife hereabouts, who doesn't wonder at my devotion and think me a fool for slaving as I do, and here you come home with your hands swinging gayly by your side, when you should be away at your work!"

At that, she burst into tears and continued, between her sobs, "Woe! Woe! Poor, miserable wretch that I am! What dark star was I born under? What evil fortune brought me to this? I could have married the finest young man that ever lived, and I jilted him, and here I am, tied to this good-for-nothing lout, who doesn't care a whit for the woman he's married! Other wives enjoy themselves with their lovers—there's not a one of them, who hasn't two or three on the string! They enjoy life, and make their husbands see white for black! And look at me, poor fool that I am! Just because I am good, and have nothing to do with such trash, I get nothing but trouble and bad luck for it! I don't see what's keeping me from taking a couple of lovers myself, like the rest of them! I'll have you understand, beloved, that if I had any desire to be up to mischief, I'd have no trouble finding a willing partner, I assure you! There are lots of handsome young gentlemen who love me, and think a lot of me! Yes, sir, they've made me all kinds of propositions, offering me large sums of money, gowns and jewelry, anything I wished! But I could never lower myself to do such a thing. I'm not the daughter of that sort of mother! And here you are, shambling home idle, when you should be working!"

"For pity's sake, wife, don't be taking on so!" cried her husband. "You ought to know how much I appreciate your worth. Why, only this morning I had another proof of it! Sure enough, I did go out to work to-day, but I imagine you did not realize, any more than I, that it's Saint Gideon's day, and we laborers don't work. That's what brought me home so early. Still, I've managed to provide for us, and I found a way of keeping us in bread for more than a month. Yes, I've sold this good man you see with me, that great cask that's been cluttering up the house so long, as you know, and he's giving me five florins for it."

"All the more reason why I should complain," rejoined Peronella. "There you are, a man who goes in and out, and should know the ways of the world, and you sell a good cask for five florins, while I, a poor little woman who has scarcely ever set her nose out of the house, seeing what a bother it was to have around, struck a bargain over it and sold it for seven florins to an honest fellow, who had just crawled into it to see whether it was sound, the moment you came through the door!"

The husband was more than satisfied to hear what she had to say, and to the man who had come for the cask, he said, "You'd better go your way, my good fellow. You see for yourself, my wife has sold it for seven florins, when you wanted to give me only a paltry five for it."

"It's all the same to me," said the man, and went away.

Then said Peronella to her husband, "Come and attend to our business with the man yourself, now that you're here!"

Now Giannello, who had listened with eager ears, in order to determine whether there was anything for him to fear or ward against, jumped nimbly out of the cask on hearing Peronella's words, and as though he were entirely ignorant of the husband's return, cried, "Where are you, good woman?"

"I'm at your service," said the husband, approaching him. "What can I do for you?"

"And who are you?" asked Giannello. "I'd like to speak to the woman with whom I bargained about this cask."

Said the mason, "Don't worry about that. You can deal with me. I'm her husband."

"Well," said Giannello, "the cask is in pretty good shape, but I think you must have kept wine lees in it, because it's all plastered over with the Lord knows what sort of crust, that's so dry that I can't even scrape it off with my finger-nails. I won't take it away unless I see it all cleaned out first."

"That's quite all right," said Peronella. "We'll not spoil a good bargain for such a trifle. My husband will scrape it all out for you."

"Surely," said the cuckold, and putting down his tools, he took off his coat and remained in his shirt-sleeves. Then, asking for a light and a scraper, he crawled into the cask and began to scrape mer-

rily away. Peronella seemed very anxious to see how he got along, for sticking her head, and one of her arms up to the shoulder through the opening of the cask, which was none too wide, she directed him, saying, "Look, scrape here, and over there, too. See, here's a little spot you've overlooked!"

And so, while she was busy in that position, showing her husband where to scrape, and pointing out the places he had missed, Giannello, who had scarcely begun to appease his desire that morning when the good man arrived and cut everything short, realizing he could not have things as he wished, determined to do the best he could. Accordingly, drawing up to Peronella, who was completely blocking the mouth of the cask, he satisfied his lusty passion to the full in the same position as the untamed stallions, hot with desire, in the wide expanses of the fields, mount the fillies of Parthia. Almost at one and the same moment, his ardor was brought to a climax and the cask was completely scraped. He withdrew, Peronella drew her head out of the cask, and the mason came out.

"Here, good man," said Peronella to Giannello. "Take this light, and see if you're satisfied with the way it's been scraped."

Giannello peered in. "All right," said he. "It suits me perfectly," and giving the mason the seven florins, he had him carry the cask to his house.



FRIAR Rinaldo goes to bed with his gossip, and when her husband surprises them in the bedroom, pretends he is performing a charm to rid his godson of worms.

FILOSTRATO had not been able to veil his remarks about the Parthian fillies so skilfully, but that the knowing ladies had laughed, pretending to be amused by something else. However, when the king was aware the story was over, he called on Elisa to speak, who began with ready compliance:

Agreeable ladies, the spell put on Emilia's ghost brought to my mind the story of another charm which, though not so interesting as hers, I shall tell you nonetheless, since, for the present, I can't think of anything else on our theme.

You must know that in Siena there once lived a very comely youth of an honorable family, whose

name was Rinaldo. Having fallen deeply in love with a neighbor of his, a handsome woman married to a man of considerable fortune, Rinaldo was certain that if he could succeed in speaking his mind freely to her, he would obtain of her everything he desired. However, he could see no way of accomplishing it, until, seeing that the lady was about to become a mother, he thought he would stand godfather to her child, and hence make himself her gossip. Accordingly, he broached the subject to her husband in as seemly a way as possible, and his wish was granted.

Now that Rinaldo had become Mistress Agnesa's gossip, and had more feasible grounds for chatting with her intimately, he gained confidence, and expressed to her in words, what she had long surmised from his impassioned glances. It did him no good to speak, however, though Mistress Agnesa had not been at all averse to lending him a willing ear.

Not long after that, it so happened that, for some reason or other, Rinaldo became a friar, and however he found his new pasture, he pursued it diligently as his walk in life. At first, in the early days of his call, he set aside the love he bore his godchild's mother, and many other little vanities besides. Nevertheless, in the course of time, he resumed them again without relinquishing his monkish habit, and took delight in looking and dressing well, in observing neatness and elegance in everything, in composing canzonets, sonnets and ballads, in singing, and all kinds of similar pleasures.

But why am I harping on our Friar Rinaldo? Which of them does not act that way? Ah, blight that they are on this rotten world! They're not ashamed of their corpulence and florid cheeks. They do not blush at the effeminacy of their clothes, and all that belongs to them, and they strut about, not with the humility of doves, but with the arrogance of turkey-cocks, with crests triumphant and chests puffed out. We'll say nothing of the fact that their cells are full of crocks crammed with ointments and balms, of boxes full of all kinds of sweets, of bottles and flasks overflowing with liquors and oils, of casks running over with Malmsey and Cyprian wines and other generous vintages, so that the onlooker might easily take them for the shops of druggists or perfumers, rather than the cubicles of holy men. What is worse,

they make no pretense about telling the world they suffer from the gout, believing that others are not well aware that frequent fasts, coarse rations and abstemious living make people lean, sinewy and generally healthy; and that when sickness does assail them, it is surely not the gout, for which medicine prescribes abstinence, and all other virtues that pertain to the life of a humble friar. Yes, they are certain that laymen haven't the least notion that besides meager living, long vigils, prayers and mortification should produce pale, ascetic men; and that both Saint Dominick and Saint Francis, far from boasting of four changes of tunics apiece, used to clothe their bodies neither in fine serges nor other luxurious stuffs, but in coarse, undyed wool, simply to keep out the cold, not to cut a fine figure. It's about time God saw after these evils, as well as the souls of the fools who encourage them.

Well, once Friar Rinaldo resumed his natural propensities, he began to pay frequent visits to his gossip, and as his boldness had developed apace, he grew more than ever insistent in urging her to grant him what he desired of her. Seeing herself besieged with such fervor, the good lady, perhaps finding Rinaldo handsomer than before, once cried when she was more hard pressed than ever, in the words to which all women resort when they are willing to comply, "Ah, what are you saying, Friar Rinaldo! Do you mean you holy men are up to such things?"

"My dear lady," answered Rinaldo, "once this gown is off my back—and I'm nimble enough about taking it off, I assure you—you'll find me no friar, but a man made like other men."

The lady looked coy. "Ah dear me!" said she. "You're the godfather of my little boy! How can we think of doing such a thing? It would be too terrible, and I've often heard say it is a very grave sin. If it weren't for that, I'd be happy to gratify your desire."

Then Friar Rinaldo said, "You would be foolish if you abstained because of such scruples. I'm not saying it isn't a sin, but God forgives even more serious sins to those who show repentance. Tell me, now, who's nearer your son, I who held him at the font, or your husband, who fathered him?"

"Why, my husband," she replied.

"Right!" said the friar. "Now tell me, doesn't your husband lie with you?"

"Of course," answered the woman.

"Well, then," said the friar, "since I am not so much akin to your son as your husband is, I am therefore privileged to lie with you, the way the good man does."

Mistress Agnesa, who was not versed in logic and needed little urging, believed, rather pretended to believe, that the friar was stating an obvious fact, and replied, "Who could find any reply to your wisdom?" And shortly after, in spite of the kinship that existed between them, she lent herself to his pleasure. Indeed, not content with that one embrace, they met for additional bouts, time and time again, under cover of that relation which allayed all suspicion.

Now one day Friar Rinaldo came to visit his mistress as usual, and seeing that she was alone, except for an agreeable little chit of a maid, he sent his companion to teach her the paternoster in the pigeon-loft, and himself went to the bedroom with his lady, who held her child by the hand. Then they locked themselves in, and began their gay frolicking on a couch that was in the room. While they were thus engaged, the husband returned home unexpectedly, and he was already at the bedroom-door, knocking, and calling his wife, before anyone was aware of his arrival.

"This is the end of me!" exclaimed Mistress Agnesa, on hearing the knocks. "Here's my husband himself. Now he will certainly discover why we're so intimate."

At that moment, Friar Rinaldo was only in his nether tunic, having removed his gown and scapulary, and on hearing her words, he said: "You're right, there. If I were only dressed, we could find a way out, but if you open the door now and he finds me in this costume, there won't be any possible excuse to offer."

Then Agnesa, inspired by a sudden flash, said, "You hurry and put on your things. Once you're dressed, take your little godson in your arms, keep your ears open for what I tell my husband, and then see to it that your words agree with mine. Leave the rest to me." Then, to the poor fellow who hadn't stopped knocking for a moment, "I'm coming! I'm coming!" she called.

Rising, she composed her features, went to the door, admitted him and said, "Ah, dear husband! Believe me, Friar Rinaldo who came here to see us, must have been guided by God, I swear, for really, if he hadn't come to-day, we might have lost our son."

At these words, the gullible simpleton almost swooned. "How's that?" he cried.

"Oh, dear husband," said she, "the poor little one just threw such an awful fainting fit, unexpectedly, that I thought he was dead, and I didn't for the life of me know what to do or say. Just then Friar Rinaldo, his godfather, came, and taking him up in his arms, said: 'Friend, it's the worms he has in his body, that are affecting his heart and might easily be the death of him. But don't worry, I'll put a spell on them and kill them all, and before I leave this house you'll have the child as hale and hearty as ever you've seen him.' You were needed to tell over certain prayers, but because the girl couldn't find you anywhere, he had his companion offer them up in the pigeon-loft, while he and I came in here. Nobody can be present at such an office but the child's mother, so we shut ourselves in, so as not to be disturbed. There he is, still holding the baby in his arms, and I think he's only waiting for his companion to finish the prayers before he can call it accomplished, for the child has already come out of his fit."

The pious fool, crediting every word, was so worried over his son, that he was far from suspecting the least trickery on his wife's part. Heaving a deep sigh, "I must go in and see the little one," he said.

"No, no," she prevented him. "Don't go yet, or you'll ruin all the good that's been done. Wait, I'll see if you can go in, and then I'll call you."

Friar Rinaldo, who had kept his ears wide open for every word, and had put on his clothes in all comfort, took the child in his arms as soon as he was satisfied that all was well, and called, "Ho, there, gossip, isn't that my friend your husband I hear out there?"

"Yes, it's me," replied the simple fellow.

"Come here, then," said the friar, and the poor

clown went. "Come, take your child, who's safe and sound by the mercy of God," he continued, "though there was a moment I feared you'd not see him alive any more, come vespers. See to it that you place a wax infant his size in thanksgiving to God, before the shrine of our patron, Saint Ambrose, through whose offices the Lord did you the grace of restoring your boy."

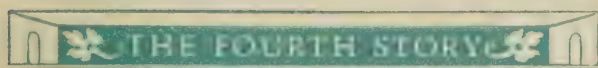
On seeing his father, the little lad ran to him crowing and shrilling in childish glee. With tears in his eyes, the poor wittol took him up in his arms, kissing him frantically, as though the child had been delivered from the grave, and thanking the godfather at the same time for having brought him back to health.

In the interim, Friar Rinaldo's companion had taught not one, but at least six paternosters to the little maid. Indeed, he had even presented her with a neat white knitted purse, which a nun had given him, and had converted her to his worship. On hearing the pious fool clamoring at his wife's bedroom door, he had glided down softly to a corner from which he could both see and hear what was going on unobserved, and noting that the matter had reached a harmonious juncture, he came out of his hiding.

"Friar Rinaldo," he said, coming into the room, "I've already performed the four orisons you set me to."

"Brother, you're in fine fettle," answered Friar Rinaldo, "and you've acquitted yourself nobly. As for me, I had only gone through two of them when my friend here, interrupted me. But what with your labors and mine, the good Lord has smiled upon our effort and healed the child."

Then and there, the foolish wittol ordered the best of wines and dainties to be served his dear friend and his companion—of which restoratives they were more in need than anything else—and later escorted them out of the house and commended them to God. You may be certain he lost no time in having the wax figure executed, and sent to hang with the rest in front of the image of Saint Ambrose—not the one at Milan, however.



TOFANO locks his wife out one night. When she can not succeed in being let in, despite prayers and entreaties, she pretends to jump headlong into a well, but throws in a large stone instead. Tofano runs thither from the house, whereupon she steals in, locks him out and rails at him from the window.

ON perceiving that Elisa's story had come to an end, the king lost no time in turning to Lauretta, and indicating that it was his pleasure for her to continue. Instantly, she began:

O Love, how great is your power, and how various! How many tricks and devices are you master of! What philosopher or cunning master is there, who has been able to teach, or will ever succeed in teaching all those arts, wiles and stratagems to which you suddenly prompt your devout followers! Truly, all other doctrines are mere child's play compared with yours, as may be easily gathered from the tricks that have already been told, and to which, loving ladies, I shall add still another, that was used by so simple a woman, that surely no master but Love could have taught it her.

Well, then, once upon a time there lived in Arezzo a well-to-do man by the name of Tofano, who acquired to wife a very comely lass called Ghita. Scarcely had he married her, than for some reason or other, he became insanely jealous. This jealousy coming to her notice, Ghita was filled with spite, and often demanded his reasons. He could offer her none but what were lame and commonplace, whereupon she made up her mind to be the death of him, by procuring him the very malady he was so unjustly in dread of.

Presently, she became aware that a young man of rare and fine accomplishments, according to her judgment, was rather taken with her, and before long she had made her pacts with him. Soon the affair had progressed so well, that nothing remained but for their vows to be converted to deeds, for which Ghita also resolved to find a way.

Among other bad habits of her husband's, she had discovered that he loved to drink, whereupon she not only spoke to him in praise of the bottle, but often wrought all her wiles upon him to get

him drunk. He quickly became accustomed to it. Indeed, she would make him tittle at will, and when he was well-stewed, she would put him to bed.

The first time it happened, she joined her gallant, and from then on made a practice of it, staying with him in peace and security. She came to rely so much on her husband's drunken stupors, that she not only had the boldness to receive her lover in her own house, but sometimes went so far as to spend a good part of the night at his, which was no great distance away. Now while the amorous lady was up to these pranks, her sad sot of a husband perceived, little by little, that despite all her coaxings to make him drink, she herself never touched a drop. This made him suspect the true state of things—mainly that she got him drunk in order to be free to follow her own desires, while he slept off the fumes. In his anxiety to find out whether the case was indeed as he suspected, one night he made a pretense of talking and acting like the most besotted tippler in the world, though all day long he had not put his mouth to the bottle. Ghita was readily fooled, and believing he had had enough, she tucked him safely in bed at the first opportunity. That duty attended to, she left the house as she had done on other occasions, and made off for her lover's, where she remained until midnight.

Meanwhile, the moment Tofano was sure she was nowhere about the house, he jumped out of bed, rushed to the door and barred it from within. Then he stationed himself at the window, so that when he should spy her coming, he might show her that he had seen through her tricks, so he resigned himself to the rôle of sentinel until she returned. What was Ghita's chagrin on her return to find herself locked out! Knocking and pushing, she tried to force the door open, and after Tofano had stood it a time, he cried, "You're wasting your efforts, wife, for you'll not set foot within this house again. Go back where you came from, and be sure you'll never return here till I've paid you for this, as you deserve, before your people and the whole neighborhood."

Ghita pleaded with him and entreated, "Let me in, for God's sake," she cried. She did not come from where he suspected, she assured him. Ah no, for she had stayed up with a good neighbor-woman. The nights were long, you see, and she could not

sleep them through, or stay up by herself all alone in the house. Her prayers availed her nothing, however, for her cuckold was anxious to shout his shame from the housetop to the whole world. Finally, when Ghita realized she was wasting her breath in prayers, she had recourse to threats. "If you don't let me in," she called, "I'll make you rue it to your dying day."

"Really! And what could you do to me?" he mocked.

Love had already sharpened the woman's wits, by its promptings, and she replied, "Rather than submit to the shame you want to inflict upon me so unjustly, I'll pitch myself headlong into this well, and after my dead body is found in it, there's nobody in the world who will not believe you threw me in, in a drunken fit. Then you'll either have to run away and forfeit all you have and lead the life of an exile and an outcast, or lose your head as my murderer, for that's what you'll be."

Tofano was not moved an inch from his foolish purpose, despite Ghita's eloquence, which made her say in exasperation, "Is that the way you feel about it? Very well, then. I can't stand your cruelty any longer—may God have mercy on you! See that you put away this distaff of mine, that I'm leaving by the well-side."

The night was so dark, that it would have been impossible even to discern a person meeting one on the road. Ghita, nevertheless, made her way to the well as soon as she had uttered her threat, took up a huge stone that lay at the foot of it, and crying, "God forgive me!" let it fall into the water. The stone sank with a tremendous splash, at the echo of which Tofano was convinced his wife had been as good as her word and jumped in. Seizing the bucket and the rope, he tore madly out of the house, and ran as fast as he could to the rescue.

Meanwhile, Ghita had slunk into hiding near the door of her house, and no sooner did she see Tofano rushing to the well than she slipped in, locked the door behind her, and then, going to the window, cried, "You should water your wine when you drink, and not at this hour of the night, after you've swilled!"

At the sound of her voice, Tofano knew he had been gulled, and went back to the door. He could not get in.

"Open! Open!" he shouted.

But Ghita, putting off the soft speech she had used until that moment, called down almost at the top of her lungs, "As God is my witness, you'll not set foot in this house to-night, you drunken pest. I'm through with your filthy habits! I must shame you before the whole world, and let everyone see what time of the night you see fit to come home!"

Tofano saw red, and in turn fell to bellowing and calling her names, until at the uproar the neighbors got up, goodmen and goodwives together, and all rushed to the windows to ask what the trouble was. Sobbing, Ghita told her story.

"Here's this fine specimen of manhood," said she, "who comes home to me drunk in the evening, unless he sleeps off his drunkenness in the taverns, to arrive here at this hour, as you see! I've put up with it long and patiently, but in vain! I can't stand it any longer. That's why I've shamed him before you, and locked him out. Maybe it will teach him a lesson, and make him turn over a new leaf."

The silly cuckold, on the other hand, told the true facts of the case, threatening to blister her back in the bargain; but turning to her neighbors, "Look at that fine sprig!" she cried. "What would you say if I were in the public-streets like him, and he were in the house as I am? God knows you'd believe readily enough that he was telling the truth! Just see how clever he is! He accuses me of the very thing I'd swear he himself is guilty of. He thought he'd scare me by pitching goodness knows what into the well! Would to God he had really jumped in headlong and drowned, that at least the wine he has swilled might know the taste of water!"

All the neighbors, men and women alike, took sides with Ghita against Tofano, blaming and rebuking him for what he said against his virtuous wife. In a little while the quarrel had been so noised about, that at last it reached the ears of the woman's kin, who hastened to the spot, and after hearing various versions of the story from the neighbors, fell upon Tofano and gave him such a beating that his bones rattled for many a day. Then, leaving him where he was, they entered the house, bundled all Ghita's belongings and took her back home with them, threatening Tofano with worse, if he moved a finger.

Now when Tofano saw what a mess he was in, because he had been led astray by his jealousy, he persuaded some of his friends to plead for him with his wife, whom he still loved with all his heart, and he finally succeeded in having her return in peace and harmony. He promised her solemnly never more to be jealous of her, and gave her leave besides, to do her sweet will, provided she went about it discreetly enough to keep her affairs from his knowledge. So, like a brainless fool, he learned his lesson, and then—to school. Hurrah for Love, then, and death to discord and the rest of its clan!



A JEALOUS man, disguised as a priest, listens to his wife's confession, in which she pretends she is in love with a priest who comes to her every night. Then, while the jealous husband secretly guards the door, she admits a lover of hers through the roof and dallies with him.

LAURETTA had finished her story, and everyone had expressed approval of the woman for having given her lout of a husband his just deserts, when the king turned to Fiammetta, and not to lose time, charged her pleasantly to continue with the story-telling.

Noble ladies, she began, this last story prompts me likewise, to tell you about a jealous man, for I'm of the opinion that whatever punishment is given such men by their wives, especially when their jealousy is unfounded, serves them right. Indeed, if our law-makers had looked into the matter thoroughly, they'd have assigned women who defend themselves the same sentence they pronounce upon individuals who attack others in self-defense. For what are jealous husbands if not menaces to the lives of their young brides, and diligent seekers after their deaths? All week long, women are pent up in their houses, attending to the duties of the household and the family and looking forward on the holidays to some pleasure, respite and diversion, like everybody else—farm laborers, city workers and law-givers—in observance of God's example, Who on the seventh day rested from His labors, and in accordance with divine and civil laws which, in worship of the Lord and in consideration of people's well-being, set days of rest apart from days of toil. But will jealous men allow

such a thing? Not at all! Days that are full of joy for everybody else, they embitter and make more miserable for their poor wives by keeping the unhappy wretches shut in with double caution. Only those women who have experienced such treatment, can tell you what a hell it is! In fine, I maintain that whatever a woman does to a husband who is jealous without reason, should not be condemned, but on the contrary, commended.

Once upon a time, there lived in Rimini a merchant possessed of vast wealth in goods and money, who had an extraordinarily handsome wife, of whom he became insanely jealous, for no other reason than that since he doted on her, thinking her the most beautiful woman in the world, and saw that she did her best to keep his love, he was certain that all other men were also mad about her, and found her as beautiful, and that she, in turn, used all her wiles to infatuate every one else as she had infatuated him—a doltish way of reasoning, worthy of a crack-brained fool. Being thus a prey to his jealousy, he watched over her so strictly, that I doubt not there are many prisoners sentenced to capital punishment, who are allowed more freedom by their guards. Far from being permitted to go to weddings and parties and to church, or even to set foot outside her house, she did not dare to show her face at a window or look out into the street, no matter what happened. Her life, as you can imagine, was no heaven of bliss, and she was all the more rebellious under the restraint, the less guilty she knew herself to be of any fault. Well then, seeing herself so unjustly victimized by her husband, she resolved, for her own pleasure, to find a way, if she could, of providing him just grounds for his suspicion.

It was out of the question for her to post herself at the window, and thus impossible to encourage the courtship of some gallant passing along the street. Knowing that in the house adjoining her own, there lived a youth who was both handsome and charming, she determined that if she could find a hole in the wall that separated the two buildings, she would keep peering through it long and often enough to catch sight of him, unbosom herself, and, if he wished it, grant him her love. Then, if a way could be discovered, she would even manage a little rendez-vous or so with him, and in this fashion,

while away the boredom of her imprisonment until her husband was rid of his devil of jealousy.

While she was engaged in examining the walls of the house, now in one room and now in another, during her husband's absences, she found that in a hidden nook, the wall was broken by a crack. Putting her eye to the opening, she was able to discern, though with difficulty, that a bedroom lay on the other side of the wall, and she said to herself, "If only this were my neighbor Filippo's room, I'd already be half-way to my success."

With the utmost secrecy, she had one of her maids, who felt sorry for her miserable lot, make investigations, and surely enough, she found that Filippo, the young man, slept in that room by himself. Accordingly, whenever she sensed the youth to be at home, she often came to the cranny, and by throwing pebbles and other small trifles through it, at last roused the young man's curiosity, who drew near to see what could be the matter. Softly, she called him and he, knowing her by her voice, answered. Making good use of the opportunity, she quickly opened her heart to him, whereupon the delighted gallant made the fissure even larger on his side, but so skillfully that no one had the least suspicion of what was going on. Very often, they chatted through it and held each other's hands, but they could not go farther because of the strict surveillance the jealous husband maintained.

As Christmas-tide approached, the woman told her husband she wished to go to church on the morning of that day, if he had no objections, so she might make confession and take the sacrament, like all good Christians.

"What sins have you committed that you have to confess?" exploded the jealous man.

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed. "Do you perhaps imagine that because you keep me shut up in the house, I'm a saint? You know I have my own sins, like the rest of the world, but you're not the man I'll tell them to, for you're no priest, you!"

Suspicion got the better of him at these words. Immediately, he was itching to know what sins she could be guilty of, and revolving in his mind the means of satisfying his curiosity.

"Very well," said he. "But I don't want you to go anywhere but to our parish chapel," adding that

she must see to it that she arrived there early enough, made her confession either to their chaplain or some other confessor recommended by him, and hurry back home as fast as she could. Some inkling of his true intention flashed across her mind. Nevertheless, she offered no objection, but agreed to do as he wished.

Bright and early Christmas morning, the lady rose, and donning her clothes, betook herself to the church her husband had indicated. But the jealous wretch forestalled her, for rising betimes, he hurried to the same chapel, and got there ahead of her. By the time she arrived, he had already won the priest over to his plan, dressed himself in one of his gowns, with a huge cowl that hung down on either side of his head—the sort of thing we are familiar with in the dress of confessors—and pulling it down over his face, he sat waiting in the choir.

As soon as the lady arrived, she asked for the priest, who came before her, and on learning she wished to make her confession, regretted that he himself could not hear her, but offered to send her another of his brotherhood. At that, he went away and summoned the jealous man, to his misfortune. The day was by no means bright, still he came to her with great dignity, the cowl pulled low over his eyes. Despite all his precautions, he had not concealed himself so well that he was unrecognized at once by his wife, who said inwardly, at her discovery, "God be praised for His miracles, Who made a priest out of a jealous brute! But let him enjoy himself, for I'll give him all he's looking for!"

Pretending not to know who he was, she sat down at his feet. Now our jealous friend had put some pebbles in his mouth to halt his tongue, so that she might not recognize him, believing he had been so clever about the rest of his disguise, that it was impossible for her to penetrate it. Well, when the time came for the confession, the lady told him she was married, and then informed him, among other things, that she was in love with a priest, who came to lie with her every night. The words went through the jealous husband's heart like a dagger-thrust, and had it not been for his craving to know more, he would have cut the confession short and left her then and there. He stood at his post staunchly, however, and asked her: "How is that? Doesn't your husband lie with you?"

"Why, yes, father," she said.

"Then how is it possible for this priest to lie with you too?" he asked.

"Father," she replied, "I don't know what charms that priest is master of, but I can tell you there's no door in the whole house, no matter how fast locked or barred, that doesn't open at his touch. He's also told me that when he comes to the door of my bedroom, he mutters certain words before he opens it, and thereupon my husband immediately falls asleep. Then, the moment the priest feels he's sleeping soundly, he opens the door, enters, and keeps me company. He doesn't miss a single, solitary night."

"Woman," admonished the green-eyed one, "you're doing great evil, and you must put a stop to it altogether."

"I'm afraid I'll never succeed in that, father," she said, "for I love him far too much."

"Then I can't give you absolution," he said curtly.

"I'm very sorry," she replied. "I didn't come here to tell you a pack of lies. If I felt I'd be strong enough to put a stop to it, I'd tell you so."

Then my Lord Jealousy replied, "Woman, I pity you from the bottom of my heart, seeing you imperil your immortal soul by this game. But for your sake, I will take the trouble to offer up some special prayers to God in your name. Perhaps they will help you. I'll also send you a little clerk of mine, now and then, to whom you'll report whether you've benefited by them or not. If you have, we'll keep up the good work."

"Oh, father, don't ever think of sending anybody to my house," exclaimed the lady, "for if my husband came to know of it, he'd be so jealous that all the arguments in the world could not convince him that the clerk didn't come for some evil purpose, and I'd not have a moment's peace in the house all this coming year!"

"Don't worry about that, madam," said the husband. "I promise to do it in such a way, that you'll never hear a word from him about it."

"Well, if you insist, I've no objection," she answered.

The confession over, and the penance assigned, the woman got up from sitting at his feet, and went to hear the mass through, while the hapless husband, panting with suppressed fury, threw off his

priestly disguise and returned home, impatient for a way to surprise the priest and his wife together, and make them dance to a merry tune. On her return from church, the woman saw all too clearly by his looks, that she had spoiled his Christmas for him, though he did his best to hide what he had done, and feign ignorance of all he thought he had learned. His mind made up to spend the night on guard, near the door leading to the street, he said to her:

"I'll be obliged to dine and sleep away from home to-night, so be sure to lock the street-door well, and the ones on the landing and the bedroom, and then go to sleep when you're ready."

"Very well," she answered, and at the first opportunity, she went to the chink in the wall to give the usual signal. Filippo heard it and drew near at once, whereupon the woman told him what she had done that morning, and what her husband had said to her after dinner, adding: "I'd wager my head that he's not going to leave the house at all, but will cool his heels keeping watch at the door. Now you come here to-night by the roof, and we'll have a jolly time together."

The young man was wild with joy at this joyous news, and said, "Just leave it to me, my dear."

With the first shades of night, the jealous husband slunk secretly down to the ground-floor room, taking his weapons with him, and lay in hiding, while his wife made all the doors fast, particularly the one on the landing, so that he could not come up. When she thought the time had come, she called her young gallant, who made his way to her from his side of the house by a secret passage, and so they went to bed, deriving pleasure and sport from each other until morning, when he went back to his own apartment.

In the meantime, the poor jealous brute stood guard with his weapons by the street-door, watching for the priest all through the night, supperless, chilled to the bone, and gnawed by mental torment. Only toward daybreak did he sink into a weary sleep there in the lower chamber, when his eyes refused to stay open any longer. Toward nine in the morning he awoke. The door of the house was already open. Pretending he came from somewhere else, he went upstairs and had breakfast. Not long after, he sent up a little boy to his wife, the supposed

clerk of the priest who had heard her confession, to find out whether that certain party she knew of had again made his appearance.

She was keen to detect who had sent the messenger, and replied: "No, not last night. Tell the priest that if he keeps it up, perhaps I'll manage to tear the man out of my mind, though much against my will."

What more is there to say? The jealous cuckold cooled his heels many a night, in his zeal to fall upon the priest at the threshold, while his wife sported with her lover, until at last the dupe, unable to stand the suspense any longer, in a fit of rage insisted on knowing what she had told the priest the morning she had gone to confession.

"I won't tell you," she said. "It's neither right nor proper," whereupon he roared, "Vile slut that you are, I know very well what you told him. Yes, I know it, in spite of yourself! And mind you, I insist on knowing who this priest is with whom you're so madly in love and who lies with you every night by means of his spells! Out with it, or damn me, I'll slit your throat!"

She denied she was in love with any priest, which made him explode with rage. "How dare you!" he shouted. "Didn't you say this, and other things to the priest who heard your confession?"

"Yes, I did tell him so," she said, "and you couldn't have reported it better had he repeated it to you word for word, or had you been there yourself to take it all in!"

"Then out with it!" cried he. "Tell me who this priest is, and hurry about it!"

His wife smiled and began, "It gives me the utmost satisfaction to see how a clever man can be led by the nose by a mere woman, like a ram taken by the horns to the slaughterhouse. Though I can't really give you credit for being clever, as you haven't had an ounce of brains in your head from the moment you let the devil of jealousy enter your heart, God only knows why. The more of a fool and an ass you are, however, the less is the credit I take upon myself. Do you think, dear husband, I no more have eyes in my head than you have mental vision? Of course not. Well, having eyes, I saw who the priest was who received my confession, and I knew it was you. I made up my mind to give you

what you were looking for, and I gave it to you good and proper. If you had been as clever as you think you are, you wouldn't have thought of choosing this way of discovering the secrets of your honest wife. Not at all! Without entertaining ridiculous suspicion, you would have immediately appreciated the truth of what she told you, though all the while she was guiltless of sin. I told you I was in love with a priest. Well, weren't you, the man I love—the more fool I!—weren't you a priest at the time? I told you that no door of my house could remain locked, whenever he wished to lie with me. What door of your house was ever shut against you, when you had a mind to join me? I told you the priest would lie with me every night. Can you mention a night you did not lie with me?

"Each and every time you sent your little clerk to me, didn't I send word, after every night you know you were away from me, that the priest had not been with me? What other man, unless he were a brainless ninny like you, who let yourself be blinded by your jealousy, what other man, I say, couldn't have seen through it all? There you were, in this very house, standing sentinel all night long at the door, and you were stupid enough to think I believed the excuse you trumped up, that you had gone to sup and sleep elsewhere! Come, get your wits about you! Be a man again! Return as you were once, and don't make a laughing stock of yourself, to one who's as well acquainted with every one of your foibles as I! Enough of this silly watching, for believe me, if I had any desire to deck your head with horns, I'd go about doing my sweet will, and you'd be none the wiser, even if you had a hundred eyes, instead of two."

The sorry wittol, who had thought himself mighty ingenious in discovering his wife's secret, had to confess himself defeated on hearing her, and without offering a word in his defense, he esteemed her more than ever, as a good and prudent woman. Thus, when he had the greatest need of jealousy, he did without it, just as he had abused it when it was entirely unnecessary.

Accordingly, the clever woman, who was now in a sense privileged to follow her pleasures, no longer had her lover clamber over the roof-tops like a tom-cat, but admitted him through the door; and

so, carrying on the affair with the utmost discretion, she had a gay and merry life with him for many a happy day.



WHILE Mistress Isabella is entertaining Leonetto, she receives an unexpected call from a certain Messer Lambertuccio, who is in love with her. Suddenly her husband comes home, whereupon she sends Lambertuccio out of the house brandishing a knife; subsequently, her husband accompanies Leonetto as far as his door.

FIAMMETTA'S story met with tremendous favor, and one and all affirmed the lady had acted well in giving her brute of a husband the medicine he needed. As soon as it was over, however, the king called on Pampinea to continue.

Many are those, she began, who foolishly maintain that Love robs people of their senses, and renders them well-nigh idiotic. It seems an absurd notion to me, especially in the face of the foregoing stories, and once again, I intend proving it.

In this city of ours, teeming with all good things, there once lived a very beautiful young lady, of good family, who became the wife of a brave and worthy knight. Now as it often happens that a person grows weary of the same fare, and longs for variety, Isabella grew tired of her husband and took a fancy to a youth by the name of Leonetto, a handsome and well-bred lad, though he could boast of no high lineage. He fell in love with her, too; and since, as we all know, a thing most ardently desired by two individuals, is seldom without effect, their love was not long without fulfilment.

Well, it so happened that Isabella's beauty and attractiveness turned the head of a certain knight, called Messer Lambertuccio, but as she thought him an unpleasant, disagreeable churl, she could not bring herself to reciprocate his affection, for anything in the world. He persisted in harassing her with messages of all kinds, and to no purpose, but at last, seeing they did him no good, he tried to frighten her with threats, saying that if she did not yield to his desire, he would blacken her character, for he was a man of vast influence. She knew what sort of customers she had to deal with, and frightened out of her wits, at last brought herself to the point of complying.

One day, when Isabella had gone to stay at a delightful country seat of hers, according to our custom in the summer months, and her husband had taken horse in the morning to spend some time away from home, she invited Leonetto to pay her a visit, which he did with great good will.

Now Messer Lambertuccio, hearing that Isabella's husband had gone away from home, mounted his horse, and riding off by himself, came and knocked at her door. A little maid went to open, and seeing the gentleman, hurried back to her mistress, who was in the bedroom with Leonetto. "Madam, madam!" she called. "There's Lambertuccio down below, all by himself!"

Isabella was woefully chagrined at the news, but terror of him got the upper hand, and she begged Leonetto to hide for a time behind the bed curtains, until Messer Lambertuccio had taken his departure. Leonetto was no less terrified than she, and concealed himself while Isabella sent the girl to admit the unexpected guest. The maid opened the door. Lambertuccio dismounted in the courtyard, fastened his palfrey to a cramp-iron, and went upstairs. Isabella feigned delighted surprise, and coming to the head of the stairs, greeted him as pleasantly as she could, saying: "What brings you here, sir?"

He took her in his arms, and kissing her, said, "Soul of my life, I heard your husband was away, so I came to keep you company a while."

Entering the bedroom, they locked themselves in, and Messer Lambertuccio lost no time in taking delight of her. Suddenly, far from Isabella's expectation, her husband returned, whom the maid no sooner spied approaching the house, than she ran to her lady's chamber. "Madam! Madam!" she called. "Here's the master come back! He must be downstairs in the yard by this time."

At this additional piece of news, Isabella, realizing she had two men in the house, and that she could not conceal the presence of the knight, as his palfrey in the court provided evidence, gave herself up for lost. Nevertheless, she dashed frantically out of bed, and with sudden decision said to Messer Lambertuccio, "If you love me, and if you would rescue me from certain death, you have only to do what I tell you. Take your naked knife in your hand and rush downstairs, looking as raging mad as you can,

and shouting, 'I swear to God I'll ferret him out elsewhere!' Should my husband stop and question you, say nothing but what I just told you. Then mount your horse and don't stay with him a single moment, I beg you!"

Messer Lambertuccio agreed, and drawing his knife, did as Isabella bade him, his face red and glaring from the labor he had just completed, and the anger he felt at the husband's intrusion.

Meanwhile, the man had dismounted in the courtyard, and marveled at the presence of the strange palfrey. He was about to go upstairs, when down flew Messer Lambertuccio. Not knowing what to make of the madman's words, or his fury, "What's this, sir?" he asked.

Messer Lambertuccio steadied his foot on the stirrup, mounted, and vouchsafing nothing but, "I swear to God I'll ferret him out elsewhere!" galloped away.

The puzzled gentleman went upstairs, and found his wife on the landing, bewildered and trembling with fear. "What does this mean?" he asked. "Whom is Lambertuccio chasing in such frenzy?"

Isabella, drawing near the bedroom, so that Leonetto might hear, replied, "O, my dear husband! I was never so terrified in all my life! Just now a young man I've never seen before, fled in here from Messer Lambertuccio, who was pursuing him with a knife in his hand. He happened to find this room open, and he pleaded, shaking like a leaf, 'Good lady, help me, for God's sake, if you don't want me to be butchered before your eyes!' I started up, and just as I was about to ask him who he was, and what had scared him so, up comes Messer Lambertuccio, crying, 'Traitor! Where are you?' I stationed myself at the threshold of the room, and kept him from coming further, and when he perceived I didn't want him to come in, he was decent enough to go down again, as you saw, saying all kinds of strange things!"

"You did well, wife," said he. "It would have been a great blot upon our honor had anyone been murdered in our house. But Lambertuccio did a dastardly thing, in following a man who had sought refuge here!" Then, "Where is the youth?" he asked.

"I don't know," she said, "I've no idea where he is hiding."

At that, the gentleman called out, "Ho, there, where are you? Come out and have no fear."

Leonetto, who had heard everything, left his hiding-place, quaking with fear, which, indeed, he had had no need of feigning.

"What's this between you and Messer Lambertuccio?" asked Isabella's husband.

"Nothing that I know of, sir," he replied. "I'm convinced that either he's not in his right senses, or he must be mistaking me for somebody else, for the moment he caught sight of me in the street, just a little distance from your house, he immediately grasped his dagger, and cried, 'Traitor, you're a dead man!' I didn't lose time asking the why or the wherefore of the matter, but ran as fast as my legs could carry me and dashed in here, where thanks to God and this kind lady, I'm alive to tell the tale."

"Come, come now, courage!" said the gentleman. "Don't be afraid. I'll take you to your own house safe and sound, and then it's up to you to have it out with him."

After they supped together, Isabella's husband had the youth mount a horse, and escorted him to Florence, where he left him at the door of his own house. That evening, Leonetto had a secret meeting with Messer Lambertuccio, according to Isabella's instructions, and came to an agreement with him, whereby in spite of all that was bruited about in after-days, the lady's husband never learned of the trick she had played upon him.



LUDOVICO declares his love to Beatrice, his mistress, whereupon she sends Egano, her husband, into the garden disguised in her clothes, and lies with her lover, who later goes into the garden and gives Egano a good drubbing.

ISABELLA'S quick-wittedness, described by Pamphinea, was pronounced most wonderful by every member of the party, when Filomena, who had been requested by the king to match the tale with another, said:

Unless I'm mistaken, loving ladies, I think I can cap that story with as good a one.

You must know, that in the city of Paris there once lived a Florentine gentleman, whom poverty had driven to engage in commerce, and his business

had prospered so well that he had amassed a considerable fortune. He had by his wife an only son called Ludovico, and wishing the lad to grow up a gentleman and not a tradesman, he had never permitted him to work in any of his warehouses, but had sent him with other noble youths to serve the King of France, where the youth assimilated many excellent virtues and accomplishments.

Now while Ludovico was residing in France, a number of men returning from the Holy Land happened to overhear a discussion in which some youths, among whom was Ludovico, were engaged, concerning the respective merits of the beautiful ladies of France, England and other countries of the world. At that, one of the pilgrims broke in and said that of the many lovely women he had seen, in all the four corners of the earth, he had never met one to compare in loveliness with Beatrice, the wife of Egano de' Galluzzi of Bologna, whereupon all his fellows, who had been with him and seen her, granted that he was right.

Ludovico had never been in love, and on listening to the men, he was kindled with such longing to see Beatrice, that he could concentrate on nothing else. Accordingly, he determined to go to Bologna for a glimpse of her, and then, if she met with his expectations, remain there a while. Pretending to his father that he wished to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, he at last, though with great difficulty, obtained leave to go.

Changing his name to Anichino, he started out for Bologna, where, as luck would have it, he came face to face with Beatrice at a great entertainment. He found her beauty outdid all dreams, and fell so passionately in love with her, that he vowed never to leave Bologna until he had gained her favor. Many were the plans he devised to further his intent, but at last, putting everything else aside, he thought that perhaps if he became a retainer of her husband, who had a large household, he might attain what he so ardently desired. Thereupon, he sold all his horses, and placing his servants in comfortable quarters, with the injunction that they should pretend to be utter strangers to him, he struck up an acquaintance with his host, and told him that he was looking for a position, if possible with some well-to-do gentleman.

"You're just the lad for a nobleman of this city,"

said the host. "Egano's his name, and he keeps a lot of young retainers. All of them he insists must be good-looking, like yourself, for instance. If you wish, I'll broach the matter to him."

He was as good as his word, for before he took leave of Egano, he had already placed Anichino in the gentleman's service, to the youth's exceeding joy.

As time went on, and Anichino had no lack of opportunity to gaze upon the face of his lady, he took to serving his master so agreeably and so well, that Egano grew very fond of him and was helpless to do anything without him. Moreover, he not only made Anichino his personal servant, but also entrusted him with the care of all his affairs.

One day, when Egano had gone out to fly his hawks, and Anichino had remained behind, Beatrice, who had not as yet become aware of his love, though in studying his behavior she had often passed favorable judgment on him, and found him much to her liking, engaged him in a game of chess. In his anxiety to please her, he very cunningly managed to come out the loser, which made Beatrice laugh with glee. In the meantime, all of Beatrice's companions, tired of watching the game, had slipped away, one by one, leaving her alone with Anichino, who sighed deeply. She looked up at him. "What ails you, Anichino?" she asked. "Are you annoyed because I made you lose?"

"Ah, my lady," he replied. "It's a far more serious matter that made me sigh!"

"Come, tell me about it—for the love you bear me," she said.

On hearing himself implored, "for the love you bear me," by the woman he loved above all else in the world, he heaved an even deeper sigh and said nothing. Again she urged him, "Won't you tell me, Anichino? Won't you tell me what it is that makes you sigh so?"

"I'm afraid, my lady," said he. "You might be offended if I told you. Moreover, I'm afraid you might tell it to someone else."

"Nonsense, I won't be offended," she said, "and rest easy that no matter what you tell me, I'll not breathe a word of it to anybody, unless you yourself tell me to."

"I have your word," said Anichino, "and I will tell you."

With tears in his eyes, he unbosomed himself to her—told her who he was, how he had heard of her beauty, where and under what circumstances he had fallen in love with her, and why he had entered her husband's service. Then humbly, he begged her to soften her heart toward him, and if she could, grant him joy of his secret and ardent desire. "If not, let me only love you, unrequited, as your humble servant," he concluded.

O singular sweetness of Bologna's fair ones! How worthy of praise you have always been in matters of the heart! You were never fond of tears and sighs, but ever lent a willing ear to lovers' suits, and yielded yourself up to amorous desires! If only I had the eloquence to praise you, my voice would never weary!

During Anichino's speech, the gentle lady gazed steadfastly upon his face, believing him implicitly. Indeed, his pleading wrought such persuasion in her heart, that she was touched, and herself began to sigh.

"Gentle Anichino," she replied, "take heart. Many have been the men, courtiers and others, who have sought, and are still seeking my favor, but never, either by gifts, or promises or blandishments, has my heart been moved to feel love for any one of them. But you, in the few minutes you spoke, caused me to belong much more to you than to myself. You have well earned my love, Anichino, and therefore I give it to you, with the promise that before this night is over, I will have granted you joy of it. But for that to be accomplished, you must come to my room toward midnight: I shall leave the door open. You know what side of the bed I lie on. Come to me there, and if I should be asleep, nudge me awake, and I will then grant you appeasement of your long desire. And that you may believe me, I'll now give you a kiss as a pledge of my word."

Throwing her arms about his neck, she kissed him with great love, and he in turn kissed her. Their pacts sealed, Anichino took leave of her and went to look after his duties, waiting with joyous anticipation for night to come.

Toward evening, Egano returned from flying his hawks, and as he was exhausted from his sport, retired immediately after supper. Soon Beatrice joined him, leaving the chamber-door open, as she had promised Anichino.

At the appointed hour, the lover came, and

stealing quietly into the bedroom, shut the door softly behind him. Cautiously, he walked toward the side of the bed where Beatrice lay. Placing his hand upon her breast, he found she was awake. Indeed, the moment she heard him approach, she took his hand in both of hers, and holding him fast, so twisted and turned about in the bed, that she roused Egano, to whom she said:

"I didn't want to tell you anything this evening, because you seemed quite tired, but pray, Egano, whom do you consider the most faithful and devoted servant of all those in your household?"

"What's that you say, wife?" he asked. "As though you didn't know! There's never been a man in my service whom I've loved or trusted as I love and trust Anichino. But why the question?"

On perceiving Egano to be awake, and further, on hearing himself discussed, Anichino made several attempts to wrest his hand from Beatrice and go, in his fear that she might be trying to play him false. She held it so fast, however, that he could not extricate it, despite all his efforts.

"I'll tell you why," Beatrice replied to Egano. "I also thought he was the sort of man you claim he is, and that he was more faithful to you than anyone else in your service. But I find I have been mistaken. This morning, after you had gone away to fowl, he remained behind with me, and when he thought the moment was ripe, was shameless enough to urge me to yield to his desires. Now I didn't want to waste time and effort in convincing you, and make you see for yourself, so I replied I was willing, and that to-night, some time after twelve, I'd go down to the garden and wait for him at the foot of the pine-tree. Far be it from me to even dream of going! However, if you'd like to put your man's loyalty to the test, you could easily find out how wrong you are in trusting him. Put on one of my gowns, and cover your head with a veil, and then go down and wait and see if he'll turn up, as I've no doubt he will."

"I certainly will go," said Egano, after hearing what his wife had to say. Immediately, he arose, put on one of his wife's gowns as best he could in the dark, wrapped a veil about his head, and went to the garden, where, at the foot of the pine-tree, he waited for Anichino to make his appearance.

Meanwhile, as soon as Beatrice was sure her

husband had risen and gone out of the room, she got out of bed and locked the door from within, to the delight of Anichino, who had never been so terrified in his life, as he had that night. Indeed, while he was struggling to wrench himself free, he had sent both her and her favors and himself for trusting her, to the devil more than a hundred thousand times. Presently, she went to bed again, and at her wish Anichino undressed, got in beside her, and both had a joyous time of it, for a good long while.

At length, when Beatrice thought he had stayed long enough, she urged him to get up and dress, and said, "Sweetest honey-mouth of mine, go now, and take a good stick and go down into the garden, making believe you had only tempted me, to put me to the test. Then give Egano a thorough scolding, as if you were talking to me, and drub him soundly, as I'm sure it will mean more days of wonderful pleasure and delight for us."

Accordingly, Anichino rose and went down into the garden, armed with a stout willow-rod. No sooner did Egano spy him, than he rose and walked forward to meet him, feigning joy at his coming, and pretending to welcome him with open arms.

But Anichino cried, "Ah, you foul baggage! So you did come, did you, thinking I really meant to play my master such a scoundrelly trick! You came at an evil hour, I can assure you!" and waving his stick in the air, he began playing a merry tune upon his shoulders.

At Anichino's greeting and at sight of the stick, Egano would have decamped, but Anichino followed after in hot pursuit, still crying, "Away! Away! God curse you, wicked slut that you are! I'll tell Egano in the morning, you may count on that!"

Egano, having already felt the smart of a good many blows, made off for the bedroom as fast as he could run.

"Did Anichino come into the garden?" asked Beatrice.

"He certainly did, though I wish to God he hadn't," replied Egano. "Evidently, he mistook me for you, trounced me almost to a pulp, and called me the worst names one could call a vile woman! I was quite astonished to think he had had the impudence to make you a proposal of that sort, to my dis-

honor, but I guess he simply wanted to put you to the test, seeing you're always so light and gay."

"Thank God, he's only put me to the test with words, and you with deeds," exclaimed Beatrice, "though he'd be right in saying I bear his words more patiently, than you his deeds! But, jesting aside, since he's so true to you, you ought to honor and cherish him as he deserves."

"You're quite right," Egano agreed, and judging by appearances, he was convinced he had the most virtuous wife, and the faithfulest servant any nobleman had ever had. Subsequently, although many a time, while Anichino was pleased to remain with Egano at Bologna, the three of them had a good laugh at the memory of this episode, the two lovers enjoyed plenty of opportunities to indulge in the thing that gave them most delight and pleasure, which might not have been the case, but for its timely occurrence.



THE wife of a very jealous man ties a piece of string to her big toe and so knows when her lover comes to visit her. The husband discovers the ruse, and while he is busy chasing the lover, the wife puts another woman in bed to take her place. The husband beats the substitute, cuts off her hair, and runs to fetch his wife's brothers, who find his accusations apparently untrue, and revile him for his pains.

ALL of them, without exception, thought Beatrice extremely crafty in making a dupe of her husband, and agreed Anichino must have had quite a scare, when the lady clutched him by the hand while she was accusing him of soliciting her love. However, when the king saw that Filomena was silent, he turned to Neifile. "You tell us a story now," he said.

Her face broke into a faint smile, and then she began:

Lovely ladies, I'd be hard put to it, if I wished to amuse you with an interesting story as well as my friends have done, but with God's help, I hope I'll acquit myself well enough.

You must know there formerly lived in our town, an extremely wealthy merchant called Arriguccio Berlinghieri. Like most of his class, he was foolish enough to seek to improve his social stand-

ing through marriage, and made a match with a young woman of good family, called Sismonda, who was temperamentally most ill-suited to him. Now as he was obliged to travel a great deal, like all men engaged in commerce, and could devote but little time to his wife, she fell in love with a young man called Ruberto, who had long been suing for her favor, and soon they became very intimate. Sismonda, being extremely desirous of his attentions, and perhaps, for that reason, not so cautious as she should have been, her husband was roused to insane jealousy, either through her carelessness, or the fact that he got wind of the matter somehow or other. Duties and business cares were thrown aside, and the poor wretch spent most of his time spying on her actions. Indeed, he would never fall asleep, until he had first made sure she had also come to bed, which caused the woman tremendous annoyance, preventing her, as it did, from dallying with her Ruberto.

She hatched many plots in her mind to enable her to be with her lover who in turn spared no pains to importune her for her favors. At last she thought of a ruse. She had remarked that Arriguccio tossed about a long time, before he fell asleep, but that when he did, he slept as soundly as a log. Accordingly, she resolved to let Ruberto come to the door of the house at about midnight, when she would let him in and stay with him, while her husband slept. Her bedroom, as it happened, faced the street, and so she might know when her lover had arrived, without arousing her husband, she hit upon the idea of hanging a piece of string out of the window, so that one end of it almost reached the ground, while the other trailed along the floor to the bed. That end, she hid under the bedclothes, and then, when she went to bed, tied to her big toe.

Her plan laid, she communicated the details to Ruberto, with the injunction to pull the string. If her husband was asleep, she would let it go and open the door for him. If not, she would hold fast to it and pull it toward herself, which meant that he was not to wait. Ruberto was delighted with the invention, and came quite often to pull the string, sometimes succeeding in coming to her, and sometimes not. And so they kept up the pretty device.

One night, however, while Sismonda slept, Ar-

riguccio, stretching his legs in bed, struck the string with his foot, and tracing the course of it with his hand, he found that it was fastened to his wife's big toe. "Aha! Some trick, I'll bet," he said to himself.

When he discovered, furthermore, that the twine trailed out of the window, he was firmly convinced of it. Cutting it stealthily from his wife's big toe, he twined it around his own, and kept watch to see what lay at the bottom of it. He had not long to wait, for Ruberto arrived and gave the string a good pull, as usual. Arriguccio started up. As it happened, he had not tied the knot securely enough, so that at Ruberto's yanking, the string gave way and fell into his hand, by which he understood he was to wait, and did so.

Arriguccio quickly got up, took his weapons and rushed to the door to see who the fellow was, and teach him a lesson, for though a mere tradesman, he was a brave and staunch fighter. When he got there, however, he did not open the door as gently as Sismonda would have done, so that Ruberto, who was waiting, noticed it, and suspecting which way the wind blew—in other words, that Arriguccio himself had opened for him, he took nimbly to his heels, the jealous husband following hot upon him. Finally, after Ruberto had run a long way with Arriguccio still at his heels, he pulled out his sword, for he, too, was armed, and turned upon him. The fight began in earnest, one attacking and the other defending himself.

Meanwhile, Sismonda had awakened at the sound of the bedroom door's opening, and Arriguccio's hasty exit, and finding the string cut from her toe, knew at once that her trick had been discovered, and that her husband had run out in pursuit of her Ruberto. She jumped out of bed in all haste, and suspecting the outcome, summoned her maid, who was privy to her intrigue. She so implored and cajoled her, that she had the girl go to bed in her stead, begging her to bear Arriguccio's blows patiently, without letting him know who she was, and promising her such rewards that she would never have cause to regret what she had done for her mistress. Then, extinguishing the light that was burning in the bedroom, she went out, hiding in another part of the house, to see what would happen.

In the meantime, the neighbors, who had been

roused at the noise of the quarrel between the two men, got out of bed and began rebuking them in no sweet terms, whereupon Arriguccio, fearful of being recognized, released Ruberto without having succeeded in recognizing who he was, or hurting him in the least, and returned home, seething with fury.

"Where are you, vile slut?" he shouted in a rage, bursting into the bedroom. "So, you've put out the light, so I can't find you! But you've guessed wrong this time!"

Striding to the bed, he took hold of the maid, thinking it was his wife, and rained kicks and blows upon her, as thick and fast as his feet and hands would let him, until the poor creature's face was all bruised. Not content with that, he cut off her hair, without for a moment ceasing to heap upon her the foulest abuse it was ever the lot of an evil woman to hear. The girl shrieked and howled, as indeed she had good reason to do, and though at times she could not help crying out, "Woe! Woe! Mercy, for pity's sake," or, "Enough! Enough!" her voice was so broken with sobs, and he so maddened with rage, that he could not have recognized it as another woman's, and not his wife's.

Well, after pummeling her to his heart's content, and cutting off her hair, as we've told, he said, "That's enough for you now, vile wretch that you are! But I'll go get your brothers, and tell them about your fine accomplishments! Let them deal with you as they see fit after that, and all honor to them! And let them carry you home with them, for as sure as I'm alive, you'll never set foot in this house again."

Having had his say, he flung out of the room, locked the door behind him, and went off by himself. The moment Sismonda, who had kept her ears on the alert, perceived that her husband had gone out of the house, she opened the bedroom-door, made a light again, and came to the help of her maid, whom she found all battered and weeping bitterly. Comforting her as best she could, she led her to her room, where she had her doctored and taken care of, and so handsomely rewarded her with Arriguccio's own goods, that the maid had no reason to complain. These duties attended to, Sismonda then quickly remade the bed in her own room, fixed it all up and put everything in order, as though no

one had lain there all night long, and rekindled the light. Later, she dressed herself and prepared herself to look as though she had not yet gone to bed, lighted a night-lamp, and collecting her clothes, settled down to some sewing at the head of the stairs, waiting to see what the outcome of the scrape would be.

In the meantime, Arriguccio had dashed post-haste to the house of Sismonda's brothers, knocking and clamoring at the gate until he was heard and admitted. On learning who it was, the three brothers and Sismonda's mother got out of bed, called for lights and came to him, asking what business brought him there alone, and at that hour of the night. He plunged into his story, beginning with the string he had found fastened to Sismonda's big toe, and giving them a complete description of all he had seen and done. To give them even more striking proof of what he had accomplished, he thrust into their hands the hank of hair which he thought he had cut from his wife's head, adding that they should hurry and fetch her, and treat her as they deemed consistent with their honor, for he would have no more of her in his house, no sir, not he!

The brothers were furious at what they heard, believing everything he said was true, and rankling with rage towards Sismonda, lighted their torches and followed Arriguccio to his home, murder in their hearts. At the sight of their wrath, their mother went after them in tears, going from one to the other, and pleading with them not to be so ready to believe, without first investigating and seeing for themselves, how the matter stood. Arriguccio might have had some other reason for being vexed with his wife, she argued, and so had beaten her, and was now trumping up this pretext to justify his behavior. "How could any such thing be possible?" she continued. "Don't I know my daughter, whom I raised and reared from a wee baby?" Such things she said, and many others like them.

At last they came to Arriguccio's house, and going in, made their way upstairs. Sismonda heard them. "Who's there?" she asked, from the head of the stairs.

"You'll find out soon enough, you shameless jade!" cried one of the youths.

Sismonda exclaimed, "God help us! What can this mean?" and starting to her feet, "You are wel-

come, dear brothers," she said. "But what can you be wanting this time of night, the three of you?"

Now when the brothers saw her sitting there, busy at her sewing, without the least trace of violence on her face, though Arriguccio had said he had beaten her to a pulp, they felt rather puzzled, and controlled the first impulse of their wrath.

"What's this Arriguccio complains of about you?" they demanded, threatening her with goodness knows what, if she did not make a clean breast of everything.

"I've no idea what stories you want me to tell you," she said, "or what Arriguccio could have found in me to complain about."

All the while, Arriguccio had been staring at his wife in a stupor, especially when he recalled he must have given her at least a thousand blows, and scratched and mauled her face, and done her all kinds of mischief. And there she was, as fresh and spry as though nothing of the sort had happened!

At Sismonda's apparent innocence, her brothers told her what Arriguccio had related about the string, and the beating and everything else.

"Lord help me, husband! What's this I hear?" she cried, turning to him. "What do you mean by blackening my character, to your own dishonor, and painting yourself worse than you really are? And pray, tell me, when did you come into this house to-night, not to speak of being with me? And when did you beat me? As for me, I have no recollection of any such thing!"

"What! Wicked woman!" he blurted out. "Didn't we go to bed together? And didn't I come home after chasing your lover through the streets? Didn't I beat you to an inch of your life, and cut off your hair?"

"No indeed! You did not sleep in this house to-night," she said. "But I'll not insist on that point, for, after all, I have nothing but my own statement to prove it. Let's come to what you say about beating me and cutting off my hair. You never laid a hand on me—and all of you here, you included, Arriguccio, can bear witness that there's not the least sign or trace of violence on my person. I'd advise you not to be so rash as to try it, either, for if you so much as lay a finger on me, I'll mar your face for you, true as fate! As for cutting off my hair, you did nothing of

the sort, so far as I know. But perhaps you may have done so, and I didn't notice it. Let's see if it is cut or not."

So saying, she removed her veils from her head, and showed them all that her hair was as long as ever.

At the sight of all this, and on hearing what she had to say, her brothers and her mother began railing at her husband. "What are you up to, Arriguccio?" they asked. "So far, this hardly agrees with what you told us of your actions, and we don't see how you'll get yourself out of the rest of the mess."

Arriguccio was in a maze, and wanted to say something, but seeing that the very thing he wanted to prove was obviously untrue, he hadn't the courage to utter a word.

Then Sismonda, turning to her brothers, began, "Well, brothers, I can see he has chosen to gorge himself with the very dose I've never wanted to give him, that is, to let you into the secret of his debauchery and evil living. I'll tell you, then. It is my firm belief that he has really been up to all the adventures he's told you about, and that everything really did happen, and this is how. This fine spark, to whom you married me, to my bad luck, who claims to be a merchant, and wants to be respected as such, this fine specimen, I tell you, who to all appearances ought to be more abstemious than a holy friar, and more virtuous than a virgin, has been carousing for all he is worth in all the taverns roundabout, whoring with every lewd woman he meets and making me wait up for him, as you saw, until midnight, and sometimes until early in the morning. I have no doubt, that while he was good and drunk he must have gone to bed with some wench of his, and on waking up, found the string tied to her foot as he told you. Then I guess he accomplished all the wonderful feats he described, and finally went back, beat her and cut off her hair. I suppose the effects of his stupor hadn't worn off yet, so he thought, and I'm certain he still believes, he played all those pranks upon me. Take a good look at him! Can't you see from his ugly face that he's yet half-drunk? Still, despite everything of which he accused me, I don't want you to place any more stock in it than you would in the words of a drunken man, and you forgive him, as I forgive him."

Hearing her daughter's defense, the mother began ranting and said, "No, indeed, daughter! He'll

not get off that easy. He ought to be killed outright, the troublesome, ungrateful cur that he is, who was never worthy of marrying a wonderful girl like you! Here's a fine kettle of fish! He couldn't have treated you worse, had he picked you up from the gutter! I'll see him dead, before you put up with the nonsense of a vulgar peddler of donkey's dung! Fine fellows they are, he and his kind! They march here to the city from the pigsties of their backwoods, dressed in cheap fustian, with falling trousers and a feather in their arse, and as soon as they have saved a paltry pile of money they're anxious to marry the virtuous daughters of gentlemen! They even learn fencing, like the best of men, and they'll tell you, 'My ancestors are So and So,' and 'The gentlemen of my family always did thus and so!' Ah, if my sons had only followed my advice! How well they might have done by you, my daughter, in the family of the Guidi—counts, all of them. And you needn't have brought them so much as a crust of bread as your dowry. But no! They had to give you to this shining light, who, although you're the best and most honest girl in all Florence, wasn't ashamed to proclaim you a whore to our very faces, and in the middle of the night at that, as though we didn't know you! Believe me, if they'd only listen to me, I'd see that he got such a drubbing for his pains, that he'd stink for it!"

Then, turning to her sons, she said, "What did I tell you, my children? Didn't I say this couldn't possibly be? Now do you see how your wonderful brother-in-law treats your sister? The lousy little peddler that he is! Why, if I were in your place and heard him say such things, after he's been up to such scandalous doings himself, I'd never have a moment's rest or peace till I had cleansed the world of such vermin! Oh, if I were only a man, I'd not leave his punishment to other hands; the devil take him, the nasty, shameless sot that he is!"

Upon hearing all this exhortation, the young men fell upon Arriguccio, and gave him the worst preachment it was ever the lot of a ruffian to hear, ending with, "We'll let you off easy this time because of your drunken state, but if you value your life, have a care we don't hear of such nonsense again, for if anything of the sort ever comes to our ears again, we'll settle this score for you, sure as fate!"

With that threat they went away, leaving Arriguccio like one bereft of his senses, not quite sure whether what he had done had really happened or whether it had only been a dream. However, he did not say another word about it, and left his wife in peace. As for Sismonda, not only did she get herself out of this difficulty by her cunning, but paved the way for any future intrigue she might have wished to carry on, without being in any further dread of her husband.



LYDIA, the wife of Nicostratus, takes a fancy to Pyrrhus, who asks three things of her as proof of her true love. She accomplishes them all, sporting with him, as well, under her husband's nose, and making Nicostratus believe that what he saw was an illusion of the senses.

NEIFILE's story had so tickled the ladies, that they could hardly stop laughing or talking about it, despite the fact that the king had already asked Pamfilo for his, and had more than once called them to order. At last they subsided, and Pamfilo began:

I hardly think a task exists, noble ladies, no matter how difficult or precarious, that a person who is ardently in love will not venture. The proof of it has been sufficiently demonstrated by a number of stories. Nevertheless, I think I can give you still more convincing evidence, by a story I intend telling, in which you will hear of a lady who had more luck on her side, than any prudence of wit. I shouldn't advise any of you to be so rash as to follow in her footsteps, for fortune is not always in a good mood, nor are men as easily duped the world over.

Once upon a time, there lived in the very ancient city of Argos in Achaia, renowned more for its vanished kings than its greatness, a gentleman by the name of Nicostratus. When he was approaching old age, fate saw fit to bless him with a wife of noble birth, called Lydia, a lady every bit as bold as she was beautiful. Now as Nicostratus was a man of both rank and substance, he kept a vast retinue of followers, and hounds and hawks aplenty, for he was passionately fond of hunting. Among his servants, he had a bright, good-looking youth called Pyrrhus, well-made of body, and skilful in every-

thing his master set him to. Nicostratus was very much attached to the lad, loving him more than any one else in his service, and there was no one in whom he placed more trust.

It so happened, that Lydia became madly infatuated with the youth, so much so that she had no rest either day or night, thinking of him; but whether he was not aware of her love, or did not wish to be, he didn't seem to worry very much about it, which made the poor lady suffer intolerable agonies in the depths of her heart. However, she wanted him, willy-nilly, to know how the matter stood, so sending for one of her maids called Lusca, in whom she had great confidence, she said:

"Lusca, my dear, I'm sure all the gifts and favors I've showered upon you must have awakened in you both obedience and devotion toward me, your mistress, therefore take care to breathe no word of what I'm going to tell you, except to the man for whom it is intended. As you see, Lusca, I'm a young and healthy woman, and have no lack of all the good things anyone else in my position could desire. There's only one thing, in short, that I can really complain about, and that is, that my husband is very old compared to me, so that I'm very badly off for want of the pleasure in which lusty young women take most delight. I'm as eager for it as anybody else, and for quite some time I've been of the opinion, that since fortune was so little my friend as to give me such an old husband, I'll certainly not be my own enemy, by not knowing how to find a way to my pleasure and my well-being. Now I want them to be as perfect in this matter as in everything else, therefore I've decided to let Pyrrhus satisfy them with his embraces, since he's much worthier of my favor than anybody else. Indeed, I've given my heart so completely to him, that I'm never happy except when I see him or think of him, and unless I'm alone with him as soon as possible, I'm sure I'll simply pine away. If my life means anything to you, Lusca, bring my passion to his knowledge in whatever way you think best, and beg him, as you love me, to be so good as to come to me, whenever I send you to fetch him."

"Very well, my lady," said Lusca, and at the first opportunity she drew Pyrrhus aside and did her mistress' bidding, as well as she could. Pyrrhus was

astonished to hear what she had to say, never having observed anything of the sort, and he suspected that the lady had made the proposal simply to test his fidelity. Therefore, he answered her harshly at once, "Lusca, I can't believe this message comes from my mistress, so take care how you let your tongue wag. Even if it did come from her, I can't imagine she meant you to take it so seriously. Still, suppose she did, my master treats me with more consideration than I deserve, and I wouldn't do him such an outrage for the world, so take care you don't broach such a subject to me again."

Lusca was not impressed by his sternness. "Pyrrhus," said she, "I'll broach this and any other subject my lady sees fit, as often as she commands, whether you like it or not. And you may take it from me, you're an ass!"

Then, flinging away from him with a little show of petulance, she carried his words back to her mistress. Lydia wished herself dead; but a few days later, she took up the subject again with her maid and said, "Well, Lusca, you know that the oak is not felled at the first stroke, so I think you had better go back to this strange fellow, who's so full of peculiar scruples, to my misfortune, and when you think the time is ripe, let him know the extent of my passion. Do everything in your power to let the thing bear fruit, for if it should fail, I'll surely die! What's worse, he will believe he was made a fool of, and we'll be rewarded with hate and not with the love we desire, for all our pains!"

Lusca consoled her lady and then went in search of Pyrrhus. She found him in a docile, receptive mood, and she said, "I told you a few days ago, Pyrrhus, that our mistress is burning for love of you, and now again I want to convince you that if you persist in the cruelty you showed the other day, she'll not have very long to live, you may be sure. Be good to her, please, and grant her her desire, for if you keep on being so hard-headed, I'll revise my opinion of you and think you an idiot, instead of the clever man I've always considered you. What more could you wish, than to have such a beautiful, kind lady dote on you above all else? Moreover, just think how grateful you should be to Fortune, for laying such a splendid opportunity at your feet. It's the very thing your youth requires, and what a re-

source for your needs! What man of your condition could you mention, who could boast of such delights as you'd be having, if only you'd be sensible? What other could you find, who would be better provided with arms and horses and clothes and money than you will be, if you give your love to my lady Lydia? Then take my words to heart, and come back to your right senses. Remember, fortune only comes to a fellow once with a smiling face and a lap full of bounty. The more fool he, who doesn't know how to take her then and there, and it's himself, and not she, who's to blame if he later finds himself a penniless beggar. Moreover, who says there should be the same sort of loyalty between servants and masters, that ought to exist between friends and people of one's own flesh and blood? On the contrary, servants should deal with their masters, whenever they can, the way they themselves are dealt with. Do you suppose that if you had a good-looking wife, mother, daughter or sister, who struck Nicostratus' fancy, that he would give a straw for this same loyalty you're making such a fuss about concerning his wife? You're a fool if you believe it, for you may be sure that if promises and prayers were not enough, he'd make no bones about using force, no matter how you felt about it! Let's give them and theirs the same treatment they give us and all that is ours! Take the blessing Fortune is offering and don't chase her away. Go, run to meet her at once and make her welcome, for if you don't, not only will our mistress surely die, but you yourself will rue it and wish yourself dead a thousand times."

Now Pyrrhus had many times turned over in his mind what Lusca had told him, and he had come to the decision that if she were to broach the subject again, he would give her quite a different answer, and agree to satisfy his mistress in every respect. He wished to assure himself, however, that he was not being tricked, and therefore answered:

"Now listen, Lusca, granted that I know all you say is true; I also know, on the other hand, that my master is a wise and very clever man. Now as he has entrusted all his business to my care, I'm very much afraid Lydia may be doing this to put me to the test, at his own instigation, and with his connivance. Hence, if she will consent to do three things I'll ask, in order to convince me, there's nothing she

can desire me to accomplish after that, which I won't do the moment she commands me. Here they are. First of all, I want her to kill Nicostratus' favorite hawk before his eyes; then, I want her to send me a lock of his beard, and finally, one of his teeth—a good, sound one."

Lusca thought the tasks pretty severe, and Lydia even more so. But still Love, a friend in need and past-master in all kinds of counsel, urged her to consent. Accordingly, she sent Lusca to tell him she would fully satisfy him in all his demands, very quickly, too, adding, moreover, that since he had such a lofty opinion of her husband's wisdom, she would frolic with him, Pyrrhus, under the nose of Nicostratus, and make the poor dupe believe it was not so. Pyrrhus agreed, and waited to see what his lady would do.

Some days later, when Nicostratus had invited a number of gentlemen to dinner, as he often did, Lydia, dressed in a green silk gown and decked with jewels, came out of her chamber as soon as the tables were cleared, and entered the room where the guests were gathered. While Pyrrhus and all the rest were looking on, she strode to the perch where her husband's favorite hawk was sitting, took it up as though she would have held it on her fist, and clutching it by the jesses at its feet, she dashed it against the wall, killing it. Then, when Nicostratus cried, "Alas, woman, what have you done?" she gave him no answer, but turning to the fine lords, his guests, said:

"Gentlemen, I'd hardly know how to wreak vengeance on a king who had done me wrong, if I hadn't the daring to wreak it on a mere hawk. You must know, this wretched bird has long been robbing me of the time which a gentleman ought to devote to pleasing his lady, for at the first peep of dawn Nicostratus rises, and mounting his horse with that hawk on his wrist, away he goes to the open fields, to see it fly, while I, poor woman, remain in bed, alone and dissatisfied. Many's the time I've had the desire to do what I just did, and I didn't do it sooner, for the simple reason that I wanted it to happen in the presence of men like you, who, I am confident, will be unprejudiced judges of my complaint."

The gentlemen who were listening to what she

said, believed that her love for her husband was truly as deep as her words seemed to express, and turning to Nicostratus, who was still quite angry, twitted him, laughing. "Well, well, now! There's love for you, when a woman kills the offending hawk, to avenge her wrong!"

Lydia returned to her room, as the gentlemen, with many jesting remarks on the subject, turned Nicostratus' wrath to laughter. As for Pyrrhus, he said to himself, on observing the event, "It is truly a lofty beginning she has made for my happy love! Let us hope she keeps up the noble work!"

Not many days after Lydia had killed the hawk, and she was in her room with Nicostratus, fondling and caressing him, they began to play together, when he, pulling her by the hair in fun, gave her the opportunity to fulfil the second task set her by Pyrrhus. Quick as a flash, she grasped a little ringlet of his beard, and with a laugh, plucked at it so hard that she pulled it out of his chin by the roots. Nicostratus let out a howl of pain, but she said, "What's the trouble that you make such a face? Is it because I pulled out six little hairs of your beard? It couldn't have been half so bad as the pain I felt, when you took me by the hair just now."

So with one word and another, they continued their play, while Lydia made the best of the situation to hide the ringlet she had plucked from his beard. That very day, she sent it to her beloved.

The last of the three tasks gave her something to think about. She had no lack of wit, however, and what's more, Love sharpened it even further, so that she soon devised a way of executing it. As it was, Nicostratus had two lads of good family in his employ, who had been placed with him by their father that they might acquire some further touch of polish. One of them used to carve before Nicostratus at table, while the other poured out his drink. Sending for them, Lydia convinced them both that their breath was foul, and therefore instructed them that whenever they served Nicostratus, they were to turn their heads away from him as far as they could. But they were not to tell a word of her injunctions to a living soul. The two boys, taking heed of her words, set about doing as she directed, and one day she said to Nicostratus, "Have you noticed how those two boys behave whenever they wait on you?"

"Indeed I have," he replied, "and I've been tempted to ask them why they do that."

"Oh, don't think of it, for I can tell you," she said. "For a long time I've kept quiet about it, so as not to embarrass you, but now I see that others are noticing it too, so there's no sense in keeping it from you any longer. This sort of thing is happening because your breath is terribly foul, and I don't know how that can be, for it was never so before. It's a very embarrassing predicament, especially since you have to deal with gentlemen. If I were you, I'd see about finding a way to cure it."

"What do you suppose causes it?" he asked. "Can I possibly have a bad tooth in my mouth?"

"That may be it," said Lydia.

Leading him to a window, she had him open his mouth wide, and after examining it closely, "Why, Nicostratus!" she exclaimed. "How could you have stood it so long? There's a tooth on this side of your mouth which, as far as I can see, is not only decayed, but entirely consumed, and if you leave it in your mouth much longer, it will surely ruin the sound teeth on either side of it. I'd have it pulled out, if I were you, before it gets a chance to do any more damage."

"Since you think so, I'd better have it done, then," said Nicostratus. "Send for a dentist immediately and let him pull it out for me."

"A dentist!" cried Lydia. "God forbid a dentist should be sent for to do this task! It's in such bad shape, that I'm sure I can pull it out for you myself, without the meddling of any dentist. Besides, they're a pretty merciless crew when anything of the kind has to be done, and I'd be heartbroken to see you in the clutches of any of them. I insist on doing you the service myself, for at least, if it hurts you too much I can let go right away, which would certainly not be the case if a dentist were doing it!"

Sending for the instruments appropriate to such an operation, Lydia showed everyone out of the room but her maid Lusca, and locking the door from the inside told Nicostratus to lie down on a table. Then, thrusting a pair of pincers into his mouth, she clutched one of his good molars, and while Lusca held on to him with might and main, Lydia pulled and pulled in spite of her husband's roars and bellows of pain, until the tooth was

extracted. Deftly she put it out of sight, and producing a frightfully rotted one, that she had concealed in her fist all the time, showed it to the poor wretch, who lay there more dead than alive from the pain.

"See?" she said. "That's what you've had in your mouth all this time!"

He could not but believe, for though the pain had been excessive, and he had howled and roared, he felt some relief once the tooth was out, and already imagined himself cured. Taking various stimulants to restore his spirits, he went out of the room, the pain almost gone. As for Lydia, she took the tooth and sent it to her lover with all possible expedition. Now he was firmly convinced of her love, and placed himself entirely at the disposal of her every pleasure.

However, Lydia was anxious to reassure him even more, and though every passing hour dragged like a thousand until she could be alone with him, still, she was resolved to keep the promise she had made him. One day, she pretended she was indisposed. After dinner, her husband came to pay her a visit, and when she saw that only Pyrrhus was with him, she begged him to help her into the garden, that she might at least feel it less of a bore to be ill. They took her up at her request, Nicostratus on one side and her gallant on the other, and set her down on a lawn at the foot of a handsome pear-tree. They had not been sitting there very long when Lydia, who had already given her lover instructions on the part he was to play, said, "I'm just dying to have a taste of one of those delicious pears! Won't you climb up, Pyrrhus, and throw us down a few?"

He climbed very nimbly into the tree, and threw down a few pears, but suddenly he cried, "Why, master! Master! What are you up to there? And you, madam, aren't you ashamed to let him do it before my very eyes? Do you think I'm blind, by any chance? You, madam, who were so ill a little while ago! How did you recover so suddenly that you can be up to such sport? If you're so anxious, you have lots of pleasant rooms to do it in. Why don't you go to one of them? It would be much more decent than to be doing it before me!"

"What's Pyrrhus saying there?" she asked, turning to her husband. "Is he crazy?"

"No, ma'am, I'm not at all crazy!" said Pyrrhus. "Do you suppose I can't see?"

Nicostratus did not know what to make of it, and said, "You're dreaming, Pyrrhus." But the youth replied:

"Oh no, sir! Indeed I'm not! And neither are you dreaming! You're carrying on such a merry shaking, that if this tree behaved the same way there wouldn't be a pear left on a branch!"

"What can this mean?" Lydia wondered aloud. "Is it possible he really can be seeing the things he describes? Oh dear, if I were only as well as I was, I'd be up there in a trice to see the strange wonders this fellow claims to be seeing!"

Meanwhile, Pyrrhus in his tree still talked his nonsense, until Nicostratus called, "Come down!" He obeyed. "Now tell us what you saw," said Nicostratus.

"You must be taking me either for a blockhead or a lunatic, master," said the other. "But if you insist—I saw you mount your wife, and then as I came down, I noticed that you got up and sat down where you are sitting now."

"You're certainly seeing things, if you say that," insisted Nicostratus, "for we haven't budged an inch from the time you climbed up the tree."

"What's the sense of arguing?" answered Pyrrhus. "I did see you. But what of that? If I did, I only saw you on your own property."

Nicostratus was more and more amazed with every passing minute, until at last he said, "I must find out for myself if this pear-tree is really bewitched, to make any one on top of it see such wonders." And up he climbed. Hardly had he reached the top, when Lydia and Pyrrhus began to frolic with each other.

"How now, wicked jade!" thundered Nicostratus when he caught sight of them. "What are you doing there? And you, Pyrrhus, whom I trusted more than anyone in the world?"

So saying he dashed down the trunk, while Lydia and her lover replied innocently, as they resumed their original positions, "We are only sitting here!"

Once Nicostratus was on solid ground again, and saw them sitting as he had left them, he fell to heaping abuse upon their heads. Pyrrhus pacified him. "I must admit now, master, that I was seeing things, as you said before, when I was on top of that

tree, and I am sure of it, simply because I saw for myself, and therefore know, that you were also deceived in what you must have seen. What greater proof could you have that I am speaking the truth, but for you to consider things as they are? Your wife is a model of virtue, and much more intelligent than most women. Do you suppose that if she had any desire to dishonor you in that fashion, she would be so foolish as to do it under your very nose—not to speak of myself, who'd sooner be drawn and quartered than think of, or much less perpetrate, such a thing before your eyes? Surely the tree itself must be to blame for this illusion, for nothing could have convinced me that you were not really in carnal conjunction with your lady, if I hadn't heard you exclaim at seeing me do the thing I most assuredly never thought of, or did in my life!"

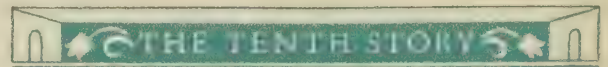
No sooner had he spoken, than Lydia started to her feet, pretending to be mortally injured, and cried to her husband, "You can go to the devil, if you think so little of me as to imagine that if I had any desire for such lewd business as you claim to have seen, I'd come to do it before your eyes! Rest assured I wouldn't be coming out here in the open, if the longing ever seized me. I'd at least have sense enough, my dear, to hide in one of our rooms, and take such trouble about keeping it secret, that it would indeed be a miracle if you ever so much as suspected it!"

Nicostratus was convinced by this argument that they would never have thought of doing him such an outrage under his nose, and laying aside blame and recrimination, he began to talk of the wonder of the thing, that so deceived the sight of all who climbed the pear-tree. But Lydia, who still seemed incensed at her husband's opinion of her, said, "This tree shall certainly play no more of its shameful pranks on me or any other woman—not if I have any say in the matter! Go, Pyrrhus, run and get an axe. Wreak your vengeance and mine upon it, by cutting it down, though you would be doing a better service if you smashed in your master's head with it, for being so quickly blinded in his wits without the least consideration! Yes, Nicostratus! For no matter how real the vision seemed to the eyes in your head, you shouldn't have allowed your mind's judgment to accept it, or even grant that such a thing were possible."

Meanwhile, Pyrrhus ran quickly for the axe and hewed down the pear-tree, and, when Lydia saw it laid low, she said to her husband:

"Now that I see the enemy of my virtue felled to the ground, my wrath has vanished." Benignly, she forgave Nicostratus, who had been pleading for her pardon. "But don't ever dare to think such a thing of me again, who love you more than my life," she admonished prettily.

And so the poor duped cuckold returned with his wife and her gallant to the palace, where the two took much joy of each other in later days with greater ease and comfort—may the Lord grant it us likewise!



Two men of Siena are both in love with the same woman, who is related to one of them, through his being godfather to her child. This man dies, and keeping his promise to his friend, returns and tells him what sort of life is led in the other world.

THE king was the only one left to speak, and therefore the moment he saw the ladies had ceased to bewail the felling of the pear-tree, for no fault of its own, he began:

It is a perfectly obvious fact, that a just king must be the first to obey the laws he makes, and if he does differently, he should be considered no king at all, but a culprit deserving of punishment like anybody else. I'm afraid I, your king, am almost obliged to fall into this transgression, this reprehensible offense. Yesterday, true enough, I suggested the subject of the stories we were to tell to-day, not intending to take advantage of my privilege on this occasion, but like you, to abide by the law I had laid down, and keep the theme which you have been elaborating. As it is, however, the story I had intended telling has not only been told, but so many other even more amusing ones have followed it, that I, for one, can't think of anything else on the theme, however I cudgel my brains. Nor can I summon up another story that will bear comparison with the foregoing. Well then, since I am compelled to violate the very law I myself laid down, I am ready even now to submit to any punishment you may administer, and for the present I shall avail myself once more of my usual

privilege. But to come to my tale—Elisa's story of the friar and his godson's mother, and of the foolishness of the people of Siena was so compelling, that forgetting for the present the tricks which clever wives play on their silly husbands, I am tempted to tell you something else concerning them. Although, dearest ladies, there's a lot in the story that shouldn't be believed, still it will afford some diversion, at least in part.

In the city of Siena, there once lived two young men of the lower classes, one of whom was called Tingoccio Mini, and the other Meuccio di Tura. Both of them lived at Porta Salaia, and as they never went anywhere without each other, they seemed to all intents and purposes to be very much attached to each other. Like the rest of the folk, they used to go to church regularly and listen to sermons from the pulpit, and more than once they had had occasion to hear of the blessedness or damnation, which was the lot of the souls of the departed in the other world, according to their merits. Since both were eager to have more definite information on these matters, and could see no other way of doing it, they sealed a pact to the effect that whichever of the two died first, would make it his business, if he could, to return to earth, and tell the other all he wished to know. This pact they solemnized with an oath.

Some time after they had sworn to the reciprocal promise, and were still as close friends as ever, Tingoccio became godfather to a son which Mistress Mita had borne her husband, Ambruogio Anselmini, who lived at Campo Reggi. From time to time, Tingoccio, accompanied by his inseparable friend, would visit this gossip of his, a fine, handsome woman, until despite the honorable relationship which was between them, he fell head over heels in love with her. Meuccio, on his part, who was pleased with her looks and had his brain fired by Tingoccio's praises of her, promptly followed suit; but each took care to keep this love secret from the other, though not for the same reason. Tingoccio took care not to reveal his passion to Meuccio, out of a scruple of conscience, feeling a certain guilt in loving his godson's mother; indeed, he would have died of mortification if anyone had discovered it. Meuccio had no such scruple to contend with,

but forbore telling his friend because he had already noticed Tingoccio was fond of her. "If I were to tell him, he would grow jealous of me," he reflected. "He can speak to her any time he wishes because he's her son's godfather, and there's nothing to prevent him from turning her heart against me. If that were to happen, how could I persuade her to be nice to me?"

Well, as the two youths continued constant in their passion for Mistress Mita, it so happened that Tingoccio, who had greater opportunity to make his love known to her, acquitted himself so well, both in word and deed, that he obtained of her the pleasure he desired, which Meuccio was not slow to find out. However, although the knowledge vexed him, he still had hopes of gaining his end at some future time, and to give Tingoccio no cause for obstructing or hindering his purpose, he kept up the pretense of knowing nothing about it. As time went on, and the two companions persevered in their love, one with more success than the other, Tingoccio, finding his gossip's plot most sweet to till, so sweated and toiled, that he fell into a serious illness, which, within a few days, was aggravated to such an extent that he had no strength to fight it, and died.

Three days after his death (perhaps he had not been able to make it sooner), he appeared in Meuccio's chamber, true to the promise he had made, and called him out of a sound sleep.

"Who's that?" asked Meuccio, with a start.

"It's me, Tingoccio," said the apparition, "come back to keep the promise I made you, and give you news of the other world."

Meuccio was rather scared at the sight of him, but pulling himself together he managed to say, "I'm glad to see you, brother. And tell me, are you lost?"

"Lost?" said Tingoccio. "You lose only what you can't find. How do you suppose I could be here, if I were lost?"

"No, that's not what I mean," said Meuccio. "I'm simply asking you, if you're one of the damned, roasting in hell-fire."

"I should say not," answered Tingoccio. "But I can't say I'm not getting my share of pretty severe punishment for the sins I committed."

Meuccio asked him for further particulars of the

punishments meted out for the various sins committed here below, and Tingoccio gave him complete details. Later, "Is there anything you'd like me to do here for you?" asked Meuccio.

"Yes," said Tingoccio, and instructed him to have some masses said for him, and a number of prayers, and to give alms in his behalf, adding that such things were extremely helpful to the souls of the dead, who had gone beyond.

"All right, I'll be glad to do that for you," said Meuccio.

Tingoccio was just about to leave, when Meuccio thought of their friend, Mistress Mita. Raising his head a little, he said, "Oh it occurs to me, Tingoccio—what punishment did you get over there, because of your gossip, whom you used to lie with when you were here among us?"

"Brother," replied Tingoccio, "the moment I got there I came across a fellow who seemed to know all my sins by heart, down to the least peccadillo, and he ordered me to go immediately to a certain place, where I repented of my sins, in the midst of the worst torture you can imagine. I found a lot of other folks there, condemned to the same pains, and as I stood among them, thinking of all I'd been up to with Mita, expecting even worse punishment for it than I had already received, I began quaking with dread, though the awful flames I was roasting in were not too pleasant, I can tell you. A man who was near by, felt me shivering with fright, so he said, 'What? it you've done worse than the rest of us, that you're shivering even in this fire?' 'Ah, friend,' I said, 'I'm dreadfully afraid of the punishment I expect for a terrible sin I committed on earth!' He wanted to know what it was, so I said, 'I used to lie with the mother of my godson, and I did it so much and so often, that I gave up the ghost.' He laughed at that, and said, 'You silly fool! Don't carry on that way! In this place people don't bother their heads about mothers of godsons!' which made me rest easy after that."

Meanwhile, day was drawing near. "Good-bye, and God be with you, for I can't stay any longer," he said, and immediately vanished.

Now when Meuccio heard that in the other world people didn't bother their heads about one's gossips, he laughed at his foolishness for having let

so many fine opportunities slip by, and bidding farewell to his ignorance, from then on he learned wisdom.

Perhaps if Friar Rinaldo had heard it, too, he might not have had to use so many arguments in converting his good gossip to his desires.

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A gentle breeze had risen as the sun declined towards the west, when the king, having come to the end of his story, and there remaining no one else to speak, took the crown off his head and laid it upon Lauretta's, saying, "My lady, I hereby crown you queen over yourself and our band. Henceforth, it is for you to order, as our ruler, whatever you consider meet for our pleasure and comfort." Then he resumed his seat.

Lauretta, now queen, sent for the steward and issued orders that the tables should be laid in the delightful valley a little earlier than usual, so that they might all have leisure to return to the palace in good time, giving him further details as well, of what he was to do during the period of her rule. Then, addressing her company, she said:

"Yesterday Dioneo requested us to speak of the tricks which wives play upon their husbands, and if it weren't for the fact that I don't want to be considered among the race of curs, who are quick to snap back vindictively, I'd suggest that, for to-morrow, we choose the theme of the pranks which husbands play upon their wives. But laying that aside, I'd prefer you rather, to think of *some story concerning the tricks, which are every day played by men on men, or by men on women, or by one man on the other*, a subject which I believe will make the story-telling no less diverting than it was to-day."

Then, rising to her feet, she gave them all liberty to do as they wished until supper-time. The rest followed her suggestions, some going to wade barefoot in the limpid waters, and others hastening to gambol among the noble upstanding trees of the green meadow. Dioneo and Fiammetta sang together for a long time, of Palamon and Arcite. In this fashion, and in various other amusements, they whiled away the hours enjoyably until supper-time.

They took their places at table along the water's brink, where, to the music of a thousand birds, and soothed by the gentle breeze rising from the sur-

rounding hills, they had their meal in joy and leisure with not a fly to molest them.

After the tables were cleared, they took a stroll around the pleasant vale, for the sun was still not near its setting, when, at the queen's wish, they set out for their palace at an easy pace, chatting and laughing over a thousand things, the day's stories as well as other pleasant matter. So, toward nightfall, they reached the palace, where they refreshed themselves from the exertion of their brief walk with coolest wines and rare dainties, and then, to the fountain to dance, now to the tune of Tindaro's bagpipes, and now to other music. Presently, the queen requested a song of Filomena, who began:

"Alas, my sorry life!
And can it be I shall again return
Whence I was taken by a hapless fate?

I am in doubt (so burns within my breast
The dearest wish I bear)
If I shall find me in that place once more
Where first I was. O my sweet rest,
My lover, my heart's care!
Ah, answer, for I dare it not implore
Of other mortal more.
Come, dearest lord, let me not vainly yearn,
And let my poor soul's suffering abate!

I cannot tell what was the sweet delight
Which so did make me smart,
That I can find no rest both night and day;
For each the hearing and the touch and sight
With an unwonted art
Have fired a newer flame to my dismay,
Wherein I melt away.
No one but you can soothe me as I burn,
Or summon back my senses sore distraught.

Oh, tell me if it is in fate's control
That you I shall yet find
There, where to my own death, I kissed
your eyes.

Oh, let me know, my dearest good, my soul!
Speak, and I pray, be kind.

Answering, 'Soon' to cheer my agonies.
Short be the time that flies
To bring you, and long bide, till you return.
So much I love, I care not what my fate!

If Fortune grant that I recapture you,
I shall not foolish be,
As once I was, to free you, dearest boy!
I'll hold you fast—I care not what ensue—
And then before you flee
From your sweet mouth I'll take my fill of
joy.
But now I shall be coy.
Then come, and let us to embraces turn,
About whose every thought I grow elate!"

This song led them all to believe that a new and agreeable love held Filomena captive, for, as the words seemed to denote, she had gratified much more than her eyes with it. Considering her all the more fortunate for that, some of the ladies who were present could not help but feel envious.

Filomena's song over, however, Lauretta recalled that the following day was Friday, so she turned to her company and said sweetly, "You must know, noble ladies, and you, gentlemen, that to-morrow is the day consecrated to the passion of Our Lord, which, if you recall, we honored with the proper devotion during the period of Neifile's rule, by laying aside story-telling for the day. The same held true for the subsequent day, Saturday. I'd like to follow the good example set by Neifile, so I think it would be commendable if we abstained from our pleasant pastime to-morrow and the day after, as we did on a previous occasion, and let our thoughts dwell on what took place on those days for the redemption of our souls."

All approved of the queen's suggestion, and as a considerable part of the night was already over, they retired at her wish.



ON the crests of the taller hills, the rays of the rising sun were already shining, that Sunday morning; the shadows had fled and the shapes of things could be clearly distinguished, when the queen rose with her company, and walked a while on the dewy greensward. Later, though still in the early morning, they visited a nearby church and heard the divine service, and again sought their way homeward, where they breakfasted with pleasure and cheer. Nor did they forget to divert themselves a while with singing and dancing, until the queen dismissed them to take their noon-day nap, if they chose. But when the sun had passed its meridian, one and all met for their usual story-telling at the queen's pleasure, and took their places along the pleasant fountain's brink, where Neifile began, at her lady's bidding:



GULFARDO borrows a sum of money from Gasparuolo, in order to give it to the latter's wife, Ambrogia, for the privilege of lying with her; later, in the presence of Ambrogia, he tells her husband that he returned the money to her, which she cannot but admit.

SINCE it is God's will that I inaugurate to-day's story-telling, I am perfectly willing; therefore, loving ladies, as we've had no lack of instances of the trickery women have used on men, it will give me pleasure to tell you a story in which the tables are turned—not that I have any wish to condemn the man's deed, or say that it didn't serve the woman right. On the contrary, I want to show you that I have only praise for the man, and contempt for the woman, and that men can play clever tricks on their dupes every bit as well as those by whom they themselves are taken in. To be accurate, the instance I'm going to relate should scarcely be called

a trick, but rather a salutary lesson. We all know that a woman should be a model of virtue, and as careful of her chastity as of her life, allowing no liberties with it under any condition. Though this purity is not always feasible, because of our characteristic frailty, still I maintain that a woman who sells her charms for money is fit to be burned alive, though she who yields them up for Love—whose powers are unconquerable—deserves to be pardoned by not too stern a judge, as in the case of Filippa da Prato, of whom Filostrato told us a few days ago.

Well, some time ago there lived in Milan a German by the name of Gulfardo, employed in the civil-service. He was a sturdy, well-made man, and a faithful servant of his employers—which can scarcely be said for most Germans—and so scrupulous in paying back the loans he secured, that he would have had no difficulty in finding scores of merchants quite ready to lend him any sum, at a small rate of interest.

During the time Gulfardo was living in Milan, he became enamored of a very handsome woman called Ambrogia, the wife of Gasparuolo Cagistraccio, a wealthy merchant and a good friend of his. He was very prudent in keeping his passion a secret from everyone, including her husband, and one day he sent her a go-between, begging her to grant him the favor of her love, in return for which he would be willing to do whatever she asked.

She had many objections to offer, but at last she declared herself ready to grant him everything he desired, on two conditions: first, that he should promise never to tell a living soul about it, and second, that he should give her two-hundred florins in gold for something she needed, he being such a rich man. After that, she would always be at his service.

When Gulfardo learned of the grasping propensities of Ambrogia, whom he had always be-

lieved a noble, great-hearted woman, he was disgusted with her vulgarity. His deep love almost turned to scorn, and he made up his mind to play a trick on her, and accordingly sent word to her that he would not only give her what she asked, but anything else her heart desired. Let her but tell him when he might come to her, and he would bring her the money personally, keeping the matter a secret from everyone but a dear, trusted friend of his who accompanied him wherever he went.

On hearing this message, the lady—the vile hus- sy, I should say—was filled with joy, and informed him that as her husband was expected to leave for Genoa on business in a few days, she would then let him know more definitely about an appointment, and send someone to his home to bring him to her.

Gulfardo, seizing the proper moment, went to Gasparruolo and said, "I'm just about to close a deal, for which I need two-hundred florins in gold. I'd appreciate it, if you'd lend them to me at the rate of interest you always charge me."

"Certainly," said Gasparruolo, and counted out the money for him then and there.

A few days later, Gasparruolo went to Genoa, as his wife had said, whereupon she sent for Gulfardo to come to her and bring the two-hundred florins. He set out for her house, taking his friend along with him, and the first thing he did, on finding her waiting, was to count the money into her hand in the presence of his companion, saying, "Take care of these florins, madam, and give them to your husband when he comes back."

Ambrogia took the money, never suspecting for a moment why he spoke as he did, thinking he was simply doing it so that his friend might not realize he was giving them to her, in payment for her favors.

"Gladly, sir," she said. "But first let me count them over again, to see how many there are."

Emptying the money-bag on a table, she made her count, and finding two-hundred florins as she had expected, was pleased with her bargain. She left for a moment to put them safely away, and returning to Gulfardo, led him to her chamber, where not only that night, but many a night thereafter, before her husband returned from Genoa, she surrendered her body for his gratification.

On Gasparruolo's return, Gulfardo, awaiting

the chance to find him with his wife, paid him a visit with his friend, and said in her hearing, "Gasparruolo, after all I didn't need the two-hundred florins you loaned me the other day, as I couldn't make the deal for which I borrowed them, so I gave them to your wife's keeping, for you. Don't forget to clear my account."

"Did you receive the money, wife?" asked Gasparruolo, turning to her. She saw the witness there before her eyes, and couldn't find a way of denying it, so she admitted it. "Yes, I did receive it—I hadn't had a chance to tell you."

"Very well, Gulfardo," said Gasparruolo. "Go with an easy mind, for I'll take care to straighten your account."

Gulfardo left the house, while the woman, shamed and foolish, gave her husband her dishonest gains. And so it was that the crafty lover enjoyed his mercenary mistress, without laying out a penny.



THE village-priest of Varlungo enjoys Mistress Belcolore, and leaves her his tabard as a surety; he then borrows her mortar, and on sending it back, demands his good tabard which he had left her in pledge, whereupon she returns it with pithy words.

BOTH the men and the ladies were expressing their approval of the lesson Gulfardo had taught the grasping Ambrogia, when the queen turned to Pamfilo, and with a smile requested him to continue with a story.

Loveliest of ladies, he began, it occurs to me to tell you a little story aimed at a certain class of people who are continually taking advantage of us, without our being able to give them tit for tat. I'm referring to the priesthood, who have declared our wives under ban, though when they can manage to lay a woman under them, they imagine they've won a complete pardon for all their faults and sins, as if they had done no less a deed, than drag the Sultan in chains from Alexandria to Avignon. What vengeance can poor layfolk take on the culprits themselves, though they can vent their spleen on the priests' mothers, sisters, mistresses and daughters with no less zeal than the churchmen use on their own wives? I'm going to tell you, therefore, of a

rustic love, more amusing in its conclusion than its length, one which you may still turn to your own purposes, by bearing in mind that priests are not always to be trusted. To my story, then.

In the village of Varlungo, not very far from here, as all of you ladies must know either from hearsay or personal experience, there once lived a lusty priest, well-equipped physically for the service of fair ladies. He was no great scholar, in fact, he hardly knew how to read, but in spite of this deficiency, he could still entrance the men-folks with a flow of homely and pious eloquence of a Sunday morning, there at the foot of the elm-tree. Whenever they happened to be away from home, traveling anywhere, he would visit their wives more assiduously than any other priest the parish had ever had before, bringing them to their doorsteps, now a little church-loaf, with his blessing, now a vial of holy-water, and sometimes the heel of a candle.

Now of all the ladies of his congregation whom he had eyed from the very first with pleasure, one delighted him above the rest—none other than Belcolore, the wife of a farmer known to all as Bentivenga del Mazzo. A fresh, lusty, nut-brown, compact lass she was, indeed, more apt for a good grinding than any other wench he knew. What's more, she it was who played the tambourine and sang: "The stream runs down the hillside," and led the brawl and the round-dance better than any woman for miles around, holding a pretty little handkercher in her hand, just like a lady.

Everything conspired to turn the priest's head, so that he didn't know whether he was coming or going, and all day long he haunted her neighborhood, just for a look at her. On a Sunday morning, if he caught sight of her during the service, he would intone a *Kyrie* and a *Sanctus* of such lustiness, in his anxiety to show her how accomplished he was in singing, that he sounded like a braying donkey, while when she wasn't there, he did very nicely without the music. In spite of the ardor of his passion, however, he contrived very well to keep it a secret from Bentivenga, and for that matter, from the rest of the people. But with Belcolore, he was different. To render her more accessible, he had taken to making her gifts, from time to time, presenting her with a luscious bunch of fresh garlic, of which he

grew the best anywhere about, in a patch of garden which he tilled with his own hands, or a wee basketful of peas, and sometimes a few heads of onions or scallions. On these occasions, he would slyly feast his eyes upon her, or tease her, out of affection, while she, the rogue, playing the innocent lassie, pretended she did not get the point of his jests, and looked as guileless as you please. And so Master Longfrock could never succeed in mounting her.

Now one day, while the priest was wandering aimlessly about the village in mid-afternoon, he stumbled upon Bentivenga del Mazzo, who was driving a donkey loaded with a pack full of goods, and greeting him, "Where are you going, Bentivenga?" he said.

"Why, sir, to tell the truth, sir, I'm agoing to town, sir, on a certain matter," Bentivenga informed him. "I'm ataking these goods to his worship Bonacori da Ginestreto, sir. You see, it's like this. He's agoing to help me, sir, in something, I don't know what, for you see, sir, the judge of the court he sends for me and he says, says he, you must appear here—"

"You're perfectly right, my son," said the priest, tickled at the news. "Go with my blessing, and come back soon, and if you should come across Lapuccio or Naldino, don't forget to tell them to bring me the straps for my belts."

"Yes, sir, that I will, sir," said Bentivenga, and drove on with his donkey toward Florence.

The priest watched him go, and thought that now was the time to go to Belcolore and try his luck. The ground flew under his feet, and he did not stop for breath until he came to the good wench's house. Gliding in through the door, "God bless us all," he said. "Is anybody home?"

Belcolore had just gone up to the loft, and on hearing his voice, she said, "Ah, father, it's you! Glad to see you. How can you be gallivanting about in this hot weather?"

"So help me, God" he said, "I came here on purpose, to stay with you a while, as I met your Goodman going to town."

Belcolore came down from the loft, and taking a stool near him, settled down to pick the cabbage-seed which her husband had just finished threshing.

"Ah, Belcolore," sighed Sir Priest, "tell me, are you always going to let me pine away like this?"

"Why, what am I doing to you?" she said, laughing.

"Nothing," he replied. "But you won't let me do to you what I'd like, and what the Lord commands."

"Fie! Fie, father," cried she, "do you mean to say priests do such things?"

"That we do, and better than other men," he said. "And why not, pray? I'll tell you another thing. We're far better hands at it. Do you know why? Because we grind when the harvest is done. Come, be a nice girl and leave the rest to me. You'll have something to gain by it."

"What do you mean, I'll have something to gain by it?" asked Belcolore. "As if I didn't know you priest-folks are so close, you'd skin a flint."

The priest hastened to his own defense. "I'm not, though," said he. "Ask me for something, and you'll see. How about a pair of new shoes, or a kerchief, or a nice worsted girdle? Anything! Anything your little heart desires."

"Well-a-day, father," she said. "As though I didn't have any of these things! But if you're so crazy about me, how about doing me a favor, and I'll give you anything you wish?"

"Tell me what it is, and I'll be only too glad to do it," said the priest.

"Well," Belcolore began, "next Saturday I'll have to go to Florence, to bring back some yarn I've spun and get my spinning-wheel fixed. If you'll lend me twenty lire, which I know you have with you, I'll get my silk gown out of pawn, and my best girdle, that I was married in, for you see, I can't go to church or any other respectable place because I've nothing to wear. Then, if you agree, I'll always do anything you say."

"God is my witness I have no money with me," he said. "But on my word, I'll do my best to let you have it by Saturday at the latest."

"Yes, I know," replied Belcolore. "You're all glib promise-makers, but you never keep your word to anybody. Do you think you'll make me do what Biliuzza did, who ran off with the fiddle-maker? Not if I can help it, my dear sir! She became a street-walker on account of it! If you haven't the money, turn right around and go home for it."

"Come, now," he complained, "don't let me make that long trip to my house! See, luck's been on

my side so far, by letting me find you alone. How do I know that by the time I get back, there won't be somebody to interfere with us? Besides, I don't know when I'll have as good a stroke as now!"

"I don't care," she said. "If you want to go, well and good. If not, you can do without!"

When he realized she was in no mood to give in to his pleasure but *salvum me fac*, whereas he would have it *sine custodia*, he said, "So! You don't believe me when I tell you I'll get it for you! Well then, to convince you, I'll leave you this good serge tabard of mine."

"Your tabard?" said she, looking up. "Which, that thing? Why, what is it worth?"

"What do you mean, what is it worth?" he repeated. "I want you to understand it is two-ply, I might say three-ply, and there are some people in this town who insist it is four-ply. Why, only two weeks ago, I paid all of twenty-eight lire for it at Lotto's, the pawn-broker, and from what Buglietto tells me—and you know he's a mighty good judge of such materials—I got it for at least four lire less than it's worth."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Belcolore. "So help me God, I'd never have believed it! But hand it over to me first."

Master Longfrock, whose arbalest was already aimed to shoot, took off his tabard and gave it to Belcolore, who, after laying it away said, "All right, then, father. Let's go out to the shed, where no one will come to bother us." And off they went.

Once under shelter, the priest gave her the most luscious smacks in the world, and making her a kin to God the Father, frolicked with her a pleasant while. Later in the day, he went back to his church clad only in his tunic, looking as though he had just returned from performing a wedding.

In the quiet of his room, when he began to reflect that all the candles he received as offering during the year were not worth, all told, one half of twenty lire, he thought he had struck a bad bargain, and repented having left his good tabard behind. Little by little, he pondered ways and means of getting it back gratis, and being rather sly, he struck on a plan which could not have turned out better. Early next morning, which happened to be a holiday, he sent one of his neighbor's lads to the house of Mistress

Belcolore, begging her to lend him her stone-mortar, as he wished to pound the ingredients of a sauce, since Biguccio dal Poggio and Nuto Buglietti were having dinner with him that day. Belcolore sent it to him by the boy, whereupon the foxy priest, biding the time Bentivenga and she would be at table together, summoned his clerk and said to him:

"Take this mortar and carry it back to Mistress Belcolore, and say, 'My master says thanks, and if you don't mind, will you please send him back his tabard, that the boy left with you as a pledge?'"

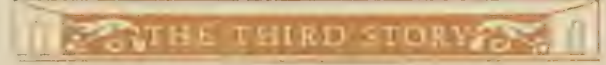
Away went the clerk to the house of Mistress Belcolore, whom he found at a deal board, having dinner with her husband. Putting down the mortar, the lad delivered the priest's message. At the request for the tabard, Belcolore would have made some response, but Bentivenga scowling angrily, interrupted her, saying, "So you take a pledge, do you, from the father? I swear by—all that's holy, I've a good mind to give you a sound smack. Run, give it back to him right away, a murrain take you, and remember, if he ever wants anything else we have, even our donkey, you're not to say no, do you hear? You're not to say no!"

Grumbling, Belcolore got up, and going to the closet, took up the tabard and gave it to the clerk, saying, "Tell the father this for me: 'Belcolore says she takes a solemn oath, that you'll never make any more sauce in her mortar, since you played her such a nasty trick this first time!'"

The clerk returned to the priest with the tabard and told him what Belcolore had said, at which he remarked with a laugh, "You tell her for me, when you see her, that if she'll not lend me her mortar, neither will I let her have my pestle, so it's tit for tat."

Bentivenga, meanwhile, believed his wife had spoken as she did because he had rebuked her, and thought no more about it. But as for Belcolore, she became so angry with the priest, that she would have nothing more to do with him until the fall of the year, when the harvest was gathered in. However, when he threatened to send her headlong into the maw of Lucifer, the worst of the devils, she was so terrified that she patched up her quarrel with him over must and piping-hot chestnuts, and then made a regular habit of meeting him, to their mutual delight and fun. Moreover the priest, to make up for

the twenty lire she did not get, had her tambourine rebottomed, and a lot of pretty jingling bells strung to it, which pleased her well enough.



CALANDRINO, Bruno and Buffalmacco scour the banks of the Mugnone in search of a stone called heliotrope. Calandrino imagines he has found it, and returns home loaded down with all kinds of stones. His wife scolds him for coming home so late, whereupon he gives her a beating and then tells his companions what they knew better than he.

PAMFILO finished his story, at which the women laughed so much that they must still be laughing in memory of it. At last the queen requested Elisa to continue, who began, still bubbling over with mirth:

Not so long ago, in this city of ours which has always been crammed with strange customs and peculiar people, there lived a painter called Calandrino, a simple-minded fellow, who was given to rather odd behavior. He had two boon companions, also artists, with whom he used to spend a good part of his time, the one called Bruno and the other Buffalmacco, both fond of a practical joke, keen-witted and clever, who used to cultivate Calandrino's friendship for no other reason than the amusement they derived from his amusing ways and lack of wit. In those days, there also lived in Florence a gay, young, venturesome spark by the name of Maso del Saggio, remarkable for his cleverness and the astounding way with which he brought all his pranks to the desired end. Having heard a little of Calandrino's clownishness, he thought he would have some fun, by playing one of his jokes on him, or by making him swallow some unheard-of nonsense.

One day, he came upon him in the church of San Giovanni, and seeing him study with keen interest the paintings and carvings of the tabernacle, which had recently been installed above the altar of that church, he saw the chance he had been waiting for. Communicating his plan to a comrade who was with him, they both drew up to the place where Calandrino was sitting, and pretending to take no notice of him, entered into a discussion on the virtues of various stones, on which Maso spoke so glibly that one might have taken him for an authority on the subject.

Calandrino pricked up his ears. Soon, feeling it was not gentlemanly of him to be eaves-dropping, he rose and approached them, to Maso's great satisfaction, who carried on his disquisition even more enthusiastically, until Calandrino could not help asking him where those remarkable stones he was talking about were to be found. "Most of them in Berlinzone, a Basque province," Maso informed him, "in a district called Bengodi, where vines are fastened to the stakes with sausages, and a goose can be had for a penny, with a duckling thrown in for good measure." A wonderful mountain was also to be found in that country, he told him, all made of grated Parmesan cheese, and inhabited by folk who spent all their time making macaroni and ravioli, which they boiled in capon-broth and then spilled out pell-mell, so that whoever was the nimblest, obtained the largest share. And last but not least, a stream of the most generous vintage flowed close by—the most delicious wine you'd ever hope to taste, with not the tiniest drop of water in it.

"Lord, what a country that must be!" exclaimed Calandrino. "But tell me, what happens to the capons they cook?"

"Why, the Basques eat them all up," replied Maso.

"Were you ever there?" asked Calandrino.

"Was I!" cried Maso. "I was there a thousand times, if I was there once."

"And how many miles is it from here?"

"Ten score miles and ten, there and back again," Maso jingled.

"It must be even farther off than Abruzzi, then!" gasped Calandrino.

"Indeed!" said Maso. "That and more!"

The poor fool of a Calandrino, observing Maso telling these fairy-tales with a sombre face that never broke into a smile, believed them as he would have believed the most obvious facts, and taking everything for gospel-truth, remarked, "It's much farther away than I could afford with my means, though if it were a little nearer, you can bet your life I'd go with you, if only to see those macaroni spilled down the hillside, and get me a bellyful! But tell me—bless your heart!—aren't there any of the wonderful stones you spoke of around here, in our part of the world?"

"Certainly!" said Maso. "At least two kinds, of most extraordinary virtues. Of one sort are the grey stones of Settignano and Montisci, by whose miraculous power wheat is converted into flour, when they're turned into mill-stones. That's why in those sections they have a saying, *God sends us boons, but Montisci mill-stones*. But the trouble is, there are so many of these stones in our country, that people think as little of them as the Basques of emeralds, of which they have whole mountains over there—Oh, much bigger than Mount Morello. And how they do shine in the darkness of midnight! You can imagine! Then there's another thing. If anyone troubled to take some fine grey stones, just as they are, before they're bored for the mills, and set them into rings, and presented them to the Sultan, he could obtain any price he asked for them. As for the other sort that's to be found around here—it's what we lapidaries call the heliotrope, a stone of extraordinary virtue, for if anybody wears it on his person, he is invisible wherever he is, all the time he has it about him."

"That's quite a virtue!" said Calandrino. "But where can you get hold of that species?"

"As a matter of fact, generally in the Mugnone," Maso informed him.

"Really! Just how big is this stone, and what color is it?" he asked.

"It comes in various sizes," answered Maso, "some of them bigger than others. All of them are dark, however, verging on black."

Calandrino stowed this precious knowledge away in his cranium, and pretending he had an urgent engagement, took leave of Maso, though as a matter of fact he had made up his mind to go in search of the stone. He decided, however, that it was wiser not to embark upon it until he had first informed Bruno and Buffalmacco, whom he especially cherished, and he went to look for them, so they might all set out immediately to discover these precious stones, before anyone else got there ahead of them. Up and down the streets he wandered, without coming upon his friends, though the whole morning was gone and a good part of the afternoon. Finally, he remembered they were engaged on a painting in the nuns' convent at Faenza, and despite the merciless heat he abandoned all the work he

had to do and away he went, almost on the run. When he got there, he sent for them and blurted out:

"Listen, boys, if you'll only do as I say, we can be the richest men in Florence, for I've learned from a man who certainly knows what he's talking about, of a wonderful stone that's to be found in the Mugnone. Just think, if you carry it with you nobody can see you, nobody at all! We ought to make it our business to go after it right away, before anybody else gets a start on us! We'll surely find it, for I can tell it at a glance. Then, once we've found it, what's there to do, but to stuff it into our pockets and go to the exchange, where, as you know, the tables are always piled high with gold pieces? Then whisk! Away we'll go with as much as we can lay hands on, and nobody will be able to see us! In this way, we can get rich overnight, without having to daub our traces on the walls all day long, like so many snails!"

On hearing him rave, Bruno and Buffalmacco shook with contained laughter, and exchanged understanding glances from the corners of their eyes, pretending an exaggerated wonder, and approving of his advice.

"But what's this wonder-working stone called?" they asked.

Calandrino, whose head was full of sawdust, had already forgotten. "What do we care what the name of it is," he replied, "if we know what it's good for? Come, I think we'd better be hurrying, if we want to look for it."

"Wait a moment," said Bruno. "What's its description?"

"Description? It's all descriptions," said Calandrino. "But all of them are nearly black in color, so I guess we'd better pick up every black stone we can find, until we hit upon the one we're looking for. Come, move along, now. Let's not waste any more time."

"Just a minute," said Bruno, and addressing Buffalmacco, "I think Calandrino's proposal is a good one," he said, "but I doubt whether this is the best hour for the enterprise, for the sun is at its height and striking full on the banks of the Mugnone. Many a stone will therefore seem whitish which, in the morning, before the heat of the sun has dried up all the wet, appears black. Moreover, to-day's a workday, and a lot of people will be sure to be around for something or other, who, if they

saw us looking about, might guess what we're after and follow our example, so that one of them might accidentally lay hands on the magic stone, making all our labor go for nothing. This sort of thing, in my opinion, and you will agree with me, should be undertaken early in the morning, when we can easily tell a black stone from a white, and on a holiday, so that none will be around to spy on us."

Buffalmacco said Bruno was perfectly right, and Calandrino agreed, whereupon they made arrangements to go in search of the stone together, the following Sunday morning. Calandrino especially swore them to secrecy, saying that he had been told of the stone in the strictest confidence. Then, after the warning, he launched upon the wonders he had heard of the land of Bengodi, swearing the most solemn oaths that it was all as he said. However, after Calandrino had gone, Bruno and Buffalmacco laid the plan which they were to follow.

Calandrino, meanwhile, waited with the utmost impatience for Sunday morning to dawn, and at the first streak of light got up, called for his comrades, and away they sauntered together through San Gallo and down the banks of the Mugnone, looking high and low for the wonderful stone. Far in advance of them raced Calandrino, being by far the most zealous of the three, skipping hither and thither. Whenever his eyes fell on a black stone, down he pounced upon it, picked it up, and thrust it into the bosom of his shirt. His two friends followed, gathering a stone here and a stone there, lackadaisically. Not so with Calandrino. He had scarcely gone any distance at all, before the bosom of his shirt was too full to contain any more. Picking up the skirts of his jacket, which was not skimpily cut, he made a capacious bag of them, by tucking the hems into his belt. Before long, that, too, was full. At last, converting his cloak into another sack, he also filled that to bursting with the stones.

Now when the two friends saw that Calandrino was loaded like a pack-mule, and that it was almost time for dinner, Bruno, according to their plan, asked Buffalmacco, "Why, where's Calandrino?"

Buffalmacco saw him clearly enough a few yards away, but turning about and scanning the distance from all angles, he replied, "I don't know, though just a few minutes ago he was right by us."

"A few minutes ago?" repeated Bruno. "I'll bet by this time he must be home, having a good dinner, and here he has left us like two idiots, looking for black stones on the sides of the Mugnone!"

"It serves us perfectly right if he did," said Buffalmacco, "since we were such fools as to believe the nonsense he told us. My word, who else would have been so shallow-pated as to believe we could find such a magic stone in the Mugnone?"

When Calandrino caught the drift of their conversation, he was certain the wonder-working stone had accidentally come into his hands, and that by virtue of its magic power, he was invisible to his friends, although he was almost under their noses. Overjoyed at this stroke of luck, he thought it best to make his way homeward without telling them a thing about it, and turning on his heels, retraced his steps.

"What are we going to do?" said Buffalmacco to Bruno on seeing Calandrino's move. "Why the devil don't we go?"

"That's right, let's go," agreed the other. "But I swear a solemn oath, Calandrino will play no more of his tricks on me. Believe me, if I had him within reach as I had him this morning, I'd give him such a rap on the heel with this stone, that he'd bear a souvenir of his prank for a month."

It took him longer to utter the threat than to fling the flint at Calandrino's shins; who jumped at the sting and hopped on one foot, but let out no sound, save a whistle of pain, and went on. Then Buffalmacco, taking and aiming one of the pebbles he had picked up, said to his friend, "Look at this magnificent stone. Oh, if I could only sling it at Calandrino's backside!"

Letting it go, he struck a good sharp blow with it on Calandrino's rump. To make a long story short, they kept up their pastime, accompanying each flying stone with some jest or other, from the banks of the Mugnone as far as Porta San Gallo, where they threw down their load, and stopped a while to chat with the guards at the toll-gate, who had previously been informed of their joke and accordingly had let Calandrino go by, pretending not to see him, to their huge amusement.

Meanwhile, Calandrino lost no time, but walked straight to his house near Canto alla Macina,

luck conspiring so far that all the way from the stream up to the town, nobody had a word to say to him, though the passersby were infrequent enough, most of them, at that hour, enjoying a good dinner. At last he came to his house and went in, stones and all.

As it was, Mistress Tessa, his wife, a comely, good, home-loving woman, was standing at the head of the stairs, annoyed at his delay, and when she caught sight of him she said, crossly, "A fine fellow you are, the devil take you! Here everybody's done with dinner and you're just arriving!"

Calandrino, realizing from her speech that she had seen him, was torn with anguish and disappointment. "O woe, woe is me!" he groaned. "Is that you up there, vile wretch? Woe! Woe! You've ruined me, but by the Lord, I'll give it to you for that!"

Mounting first to a small room in the attic, he threw down the load of stones he had brought home. Then, rushing upon his wife in a frenzy, he seized her by the braids, flung her down at his feet, and belabored her with blows and kicks until he could hardly move his arms and legs, leaving her with scarcely a hair on her head, or a whole bone in her body. In vain the poor woman implored his mercy.

Buffalmacco and Bruno, in the meantime, had had a hearty laugh with the guards at the toll-gate, and then had started out to follow Calandrino home at a leisurely pace. When they came to the door of his house, they heard the sounds of the merciless thrashing he was giving his wife, and called him, as though they had just arrived. Calandrino, red as a turkey-cock, and out of breath with exertion, looked out of the window, asking them to come up, which they did, pretending to be cross with him.

Upstairs, they came upon a room full of stones and pebbles, with Mistress Tessa in a corner, weeping pitifully, her hair disheveled, her clothes torn, and her face bruised and livid, while in another, Calandrino slumped dejected in a chair, untidy and panting with fatigue.

They stared about them a while in silence, and then remarked, "What's this, Calandrino? Are you thinking of becoming a stone-mason, with all this load of stones here? And what's the matter with Mistress Tessa?" they added. "It looks very much as if you'd given her a beating. Fie upon you! What sort of behavior is this?"

Calandrino, exhausted from the weight of the stones he had carried, the frenzy of the thrashing he had given his wife, and the irritation he felt at the loss of what he thought a stroke of luck, could scarcely gather sufficient wit to answer in anything but inarticulate grunts, so that after waiting for an answer, Buffalmacco continued:

"It seems to me, Calandrino, that if you had a grudge to vent, you shouldn't have taken it out on us as you did, first dragging us along with you to look for a magic stone in the Mugnone, and then leaving us there, like two fools, without so much as saying Good-bye, or By your leave, and coming back home by yourself! We're considerably offended at your behavior, I'll have you know, and I assure you this is the last time you'll ever fool us."

Calandrino struggled to speak, and at last managed to say, "Don't be angry, friends. The case is different from what you suppose. I had found the stone—ah, miserable wretch that I am! Do you want me to prove I'm telling the truth? Well, then, when you were asking each other about me, I was scarcely ten yards away from you, and seeing that you were about to go and didn't see me, I took the lead and walked on home ahead of you all the way."

Beginning from the beginning, he told them the whole tale of what they had said and done, showing them the bruises the pebbles had made on his back and shins. "I want to tell you further," he continued, "that as I came through the toll-gates with all these stones in the bosom of my shirt, nobody stopped me, not so much as with a word—and you know what pests those guards are, with their noses anxious to pry into everything! What's more, I met a number of friends and comrades in the street, who would ordinarily have stopped to invite me to a drink, but not a word did they say, not a syllable, as though they hadn't seen me! Finally, I reached the house, and who should pop up in front of me, but this damned devil of a woman, who saw me at once, for being a woman she has the power of making anything lose its virtue! But you know that as well as I. And so it was that I, who might have considered myself the luckiest man in Florence, am now the most unlucky! Oh, but I gave it to her for this! I beat her as long as I had the strength to do it, and I don't know what prevented me from slitting

her throat—damn the moment I ever laid eyes on her, and the day she set foot in this house!"

His rage kindling to sudden flame, he would have got up to give her another drubbing.

During his account, the two friends made a great show of astonishment, although they nearly exploded in their effort to contain their laughter. However, when they saw him leave his chair in a fury to give poor Mistress Tessa another back-basting, they interposed and held him back, saying it had not been the woman's fault at all. Indeed, the blame was all his, since he was aware that women have the power of depriving things of their virtue, and had not warned her to keep out of his way all that day. Yes, they were sure God must have made him forget the precaution, either because that stroke of luck was not destined to be his, or because he had intended from the beginning to cheat his comrades, to whom he should have communicated his good fortune, the moment he had found the stone.

At last, after a great deal of parleying, they succeeded, though not without much trouble, in reconciling the doleful woman to her husband, whom they left vexed and gloomy amid a houseful of stones.

THE FOURTH STORY

THE rector of the church of Fiesole is in love with a woman who does not care for him, and thinking he is in bed with her, lies with a slattern of hers until the lady's brothers come in with the bishop, and expose him.

WHEN Eliza had reached the end of her story, which she had told to the huge amusement of the entire party, the queen indicated that it was her pleasure for Emilia to continue.

Virtuous ladies, she began with alacrity, I know full well we've already had plenty of examples to show us how insidiously priests, friars and clergymen of all orders lay siege to our honor, but since, even if we continued from now until doomsday, there still would be enough left to tell on that score, I intend to add another instance to those already related. This time, it is about a rector who would have been willing to turn the world upside down to gain the love of a noble lady, whether she wished it or not. But she gave him all he was looking for, thanks to her wit.

As all of you know, I'm sure, Fiesole, the crest of whose hill we can see from here, was once a large and very important city, though there is little of its ancient splendor left now. Nevertheless, it remained a bishop's seat all through the years, and retains that honor to this day.

Once upon a time, a certain widow by the name of Piccarda used to live there in a very comfortable, though not too large house near the main cathedral, and as she had no great fortune, she spent the better part of the year in town with her two brothers, both of them genteel, respectable youths.

Now Madam Piccarda was still comparatively young, beautiful and charming. Almost every Sunday, she used to attend the services at the cathedral, the rector of which fell so passionately in love with her, that he had no mind for anything else. Indeed, he was so tormented by his passion that he lost no time in revealing his desire to her himself, pleading with her to return his affection and cherish him as he did her.

The rector was a man already well on in years, though poor in wit, bold and snobbish to boot, and with an exalted opinion of how much he could venture. His manners were well-nigh non-existent, and the modicum he possessed was replete with arrogance and unpleasantness. He was, moreover, such a perverse, disagreeable curmudgeon, that scarcely anyone bore him any love. But if there was an individual who might have been said to love him least of all, it was Madam Piccarda, who not only loved him not a jot, but hated him more than a sick-headache.

On hearing his offer, she replied, like the prudent woman she was, "Father, I know I should be very grateful that you love me as you do, and I ought to return the same regard. I shall gladly endeavor to do so, but I want you to understand that nothing unworthy must ever come between your love and mine. You are a priest, and my spiritual father, and you are now on the brink of old age, all of which should tend to make you both virtuous and chaste. As for me, I'm no longer a child, and such amorous pastimes are not becoming to a woman of my years, and a widow, of whom, you ought to know, people expect the most exemplary behavior. Therefore, leave me out of your reckonings, please, for I'll never give

you the kind of love you want, nor do I wish to receive the like from you."

That was as much as the rector could obtain from her at his first attempt. He did not give himself up for chastened or vanquished, however, but with his usual arrogance solicited her many other times by means of missives, messages, and whenever he saw her in church, even by broaching the subject himself.

The annoyance and vexation of the unpleasant suit were becoming more than the lady could bear, whereupon she determined to get rid of the nuisance by foul means, as he deserved, since he would not accept the good. Still, she did not care to undertake any measures before she had consulted her brothers, whom she informed of the rector's behavior and of what she intended to do to put an end to it. They gave her permission to carry out her plan to the full, whereupon in a few days she went to church again according to her custom.

The rector no sooner spied her, than he approached her with his usual mock-paternal solicitude, to harp upon the topic near his heart. On seeing him approach, she assumed a joviality which she was far from feeling, and then, drawing to a corner of the church, she said with a deep-drawn sigh, after listening to his customary blandishments:

"Father, I have often heard that no matter how strong the fortress, it is bound to fall before a daily attack. Such, as I can see, is my own case, for you besieged me so long and so persistently, what with honeyed words and courtesies and other gallantries, that you've at last succeeded in making me break my resolution. Now, since you will have me so, I confess myself ready to yield to you."

The rector beamed with joy. "Thank you, daughter, from the bottom of my heart," he said. "To be frank, I couldn't help wondering how you could have borne up so long—a thing quite without parallel in my experience. Indeed, I've often said to myself, 'If women were made of silver, they wouldn't be worth a brass farthing, for not a one of them could bear up under the hammer.' But enough of that for the present. Tell me, rather, when we can be together, and where?"

"Dear father," she replied, "as for when, it's for you to choose, since I've no husband to whom

I'm accountable for the way I spend my nights. But as for the place, I've no idea."

"What, you've no idea!" said he. "And what about your house?"

She said, "You know, father, that I have two younger brothers living with me, who are always inviting parties of friends to make merry both day and night. The house is none too large, and we could not possibly be together there, unless you were willing to act like a dummy, without saying a word or making a sound, and stay in the dark, like the blind. If that suits you, I can manage it, as they never bother to come into my room. The only trouble is, that their bedroom is right next to mine, so that we couldn't even whisper the least little word without their hearing it."

"Well, we can put up with it for a night or two," rejoined the rector, "until I think of some other place, where we can be more at our ease."

"It's up to you, father," said she. "There's one thing I want to beg of you, though. Keep this thing secret, so that no one will ever hear a word of it."

Quoth the rector, "Never fear, my dear. And if you can, manage to let us meet to-night."

"Very well," she said, and giving him instructions about how to get there, and when, she said good-bye and returned home.

As it was, Madam Piccarda had a scullery-maid who was rather ripe in years, and had the ugliest, most villainous face anyone could ever hope to see. Her nose was squashed into her face, her mouth thick-lipped and twisted, her teeth huge and all askew, and she had, moreover, a marvelous squint. Furthermore, her eyes were always rheumy, and her complexion sallow, verging on a yellow so tinged with green, that you would never have thought she spent the summers at Fiesole, but rather at Sinigaglia. As though that weren't enough, she was lame on one side, and crooked-hipped. Her real name was Ciuta, but because she was blessed with such a phenomenally bull-doggish face, she had been dubbed Ciutazza, Ugly Ciuta, by common accord. Though she was no rare beauty, she still had a touch of humorous shrewdness in her make-up.

When Madam Piccarda came home, she called her maid and said, "Listen, Ciutazza, if you'll do me a favor to-night, I'll give you a lovely new smock."

"A smock!" exclaimed Ciutazza to herself, and aloud, "Why, madam, if you were to give me a smock," she said, "I'd jump in the flames, to say the least."

"Good!" said Madam Piccarda. "Well, then, to-night I'd like you to lie in my bed with a man. Be nice to him, caress him, but be careful you don't say a word, so that my brothers won't hear you, for as you know, my brothers sleep right next door. When you've done that for me, I'll let you have the smock."

"I'll sleep with six of them, let alone one, if I have to," said the girl.

With the first shadows of night, our gay spark the rector came, as he had been told, while Madam Piccarda's two brothers posted themselves in their room, as she had directed, taking care they were not heard. The passionate lover glided stealthily into his lady's chamber, in pitch darkness, and groped his way to the bed as she had instructed him; Ciutazza, well-instructed by her mistress, came in and did likewise. Then our lusty rector, thinking he had his mistress by his side, clasped the wench in his arms and fell to kissing her passionately, without saying a word. Ciutazza returned his caresses, and soon the rector played a merry sport with her, as he took possession of what he believed to be the bounties he had so long coveted.

This part of her work done, Madam Piccarda sent her brothers to carry out the rest of the plan. Accordingly, they stole out of the room and went toward the square, where, much to their delight, luck favored their plot even beyond their expectation; for the bishop, whom they were seeking, coming to meet them as soon as he caught sight of them, invited himself of his own accord to go to their home, and there, as the heat was intense, to spend a few enjoyable hours over the friendly cup. Together, they returned to the house, sat down to rest in a pleasant, cool little courtyard gay with many lights, and drank one another's healths with great relish, in sparkling bowls of their excellent sack. After the bishop had been entertained with drink, the young men said to him:

"Your worship, since you were so gracious as to honor us by your visit to this modest little house of ours, as we were coming to invite you, we should

like you to do us the courtesy of looking at something we wish to show you."

"Gladly," said the bishop.

Taking a lighted torch in his hand, one of the youths led the way to the room where our jolly rector was lying with Ciutazza. The bishop and his company followed close behind. Now the lusty gallant had made the best of his gallop, so eager had he been to reach his destination, so that by the time the unexpected guests arrived, he had gone more than three stones, which had exhausted him not a little, and plunged him into sound slumber, with Ciuta still tight in his embrace, despite the heat. Thus it was, when the youth entered the room with the light in his hand, that the rector was revealed to the bishop, and the others who had followed close behind. Suddenly, he woke up, and at the sight of the bishop and all his company, he was so mortified, that he pulled his head in under the covers.

Grave were the reproaches the bishop heaped upon him, which culminated with his asking the culprit to come out of hiding, and look full on the creature with whom he had been lying. Then the lady's trick dawned clear upon the rector's mind. What with the realization and the dishonor he had cast upon himself, he was the most miserable man alive. Trembling, he dressed at the bishop's command, and he was marched away under close guard to the rectory, to expiate his grievous sin.

Later, the bishop wishing to know how the rector had come to be lying with Ciutazza in their house, the two brothers related the story from the beginning, which made him praise Madam Piccarda's virtue and their forbearance alike, in not wishing to stain their hands with the blood of a priest, but preferring to deal with the wretch as he deserved.

The rector was made to suffer a forty-day penance for his sin; but frustrated passion and rancor made him repine more than forty days and nine, all the more because, for a long time, he could scarcely set foot in the streets without being pointed at by the urchins, who cried, "Look! Look! There's the man who went to bed with Ciutazza," which so galled him that he nearly went mad. So it was that the honest laymen got rid of the importunate rector's unpleasant suit, while Ciutazza gained a brand new smock and a jolly night in the bargain.



Three merry scalawags pull down a judge's pantaloons, while he is on the bench hearing his cases.

So Emilia told her story, after which, the widow having received unanimous applause, the queen looked at Filostrato, saying: "Now it is your turn to speak."

"Your servant," he replied promptly, and began:

Winsome ladies, the merry fellow mentioned by Elisa a little while ago, that is, Maso del Saggio, made me lay aside the story I had intended telling, in favor of another about him and several cronies of his. There's nothing in it, I assure you, that is scandalous, even though it does contain certain words you blush to use. It is such an amusing tale, however, that I shall tell it, in spite of everything.

You've all heard of the provosts from the Marches, who often come to our city. They are mean-spirited creatures as a rule, and so petty and narrow in their way of living, that whatever they undertake seems degraded to a petty, worthless little business. Such is their innate meanness and avarice, that even the judges and notaries who trail at their heels look more like clodhoppers dragged from their plows or cobblers' benches, than products of the law-schools.

On a certain occasion, one of these gentlemen from the Marches came to act as provost here, and among the hosts of judges he brought along with him was a certain Messer Nicola da San Lepidio—for so he called himself—a man who looked more like a tinker than anything else. Nevertheless, he was raised to the bench, and like the rest of the judges, heard criminal cases.

Though our honest citizens have nothing to do in the courtroom, still they sometimes go there, and as it happened, Maso del Saggio shambled in one morning, looking for one of his friends. While looking about, he chanced to glance in the direction of Messer Nicola. "A strange-looking bird," thought he, and examined him narrowly. The fellow's cap was black with soot; a sorry-looking quill and horn hung at his side; the tunic he wore was longer than his cloak—in short, he offered many peculiarities foreign to the nature of a well-bred gentleman. But what was most astonishing, in Maso's opinion, was

the pair of breeches that graced him which, as he sat, and his clothes spread open back and front because of the stinginess of their cut, revealed a baggy seat, that hung at least half-way down his thighs.

Maso didn't waste much time idly staring, but forgetting the purpose of his search, he went a-hunting newer sport, and sought out two of his comrades, Ribi and Matteuzzo, both of them scalawags, no less merry than himself.

"As you love me," said Maso to them, "come with me to the court-room, where I'll show you the most peculiar scare-crow you've ever laid eyes on."

Together, they hied to the palace of justice, where he showed them the stylish judge and his breeches which, even at a distance, made them roar with laughter. Drawing nearer the bench where our venerable judge was sitting, they perceived it would not be difficult for one to slip under it. What's more, they also observed that the boards on which he rested his feet were broken, so that it would be no great matter for a hand to be slid through, and the whole arm as well.

Maso said to his friends, "Let's pull these precious breeches off, altogether. It's so easy!"

The other two had already perceived how readily it could be accomplished, whereupon conferring on the way to go about it, they went away and returned the following morning. The court-room was crowded. Matteuzzo, taking advantage of it, slipped unobserved under the bench, and crawled right under the spot where the judge's feet were dangling.

Meanwhile, Maso approached the venerable gentleman, and clutching him on one side by the tail of his gown, as Ribi followed suit on the other, he began, "Your honor, O your honor! Please, for God's sake, grasp that insignificant little thief on the other side of you, before he has a chance to fly the coop, and let him give me back the pair of boots he stole from me. He denies it, but I tell you I saw him having new soles put on them, scarcely a month ago!"

On the other hand, Ribi was shouting at the top of his lungs, "Don't you believe him, your honor, for he's a notorious rascal. He knows I came here to reclaim the pack-saddles he stole from me, that's why he's telling you that story about the boots, which I've always had in my house—as a matter of fact until yesterday. Trecca, my next-door neighbor,

will be my witness, and Grassa, who sells lungs and tripes and lights, and the man who sweeps up the garbage at Santa Maria Verzaia, who saw him as he was coming from the country."

Here Maso interrupted Ribi, shouting to drown him out, and Ribi, not to be daunted, shouted even louder. Meanwhile, as the judge stood up and came closer to them, the better to grasp what they were haranguing about, Matteuzzo saw his chance, and thrusting his hand through the broken plank, got hold of the seat of the venerable pantaloons, and tugged for all he was worth. Down came the breeches in a trice, for the judge was skinny, and had no flesh on his buttocks. When he felt what was happening, though he could not tell exactly what it was, the judge tried to pull his gown together, to cover his nakedness and sit down, but Maso on the one hand, and Ribi on the other still clutched him, shouting with all their might, "Your honor, you are behaving outrageously, not to listen to my case, and trying to get out of giving me justice by stealing out of here. You know I can't be given a warrant in this city for such a small case as this!"

They cried for justice so long, and held on to the judge's coat until everyone in the courtroom was at last aware that the venerable's breeches had been pulled down. Then Matteuzzo, who, from under the plank, had held them by the seat a considerable time, let them go, and stole out of the palace without being seen, at which Ribi, satisfied with his own share in the work, cried, "I swear to God I'll bring my case before the Mayor," and released the judge's coat. Maso, too, released his hold, crying, "Not I, though! I'll keep on coming here day in and day out, until I find you less distracted than you seem to be this morning, your honor!" Then, having spoken, both of them scampered away in opposite directions, out of the court, as fast as their heels could carry them.

As for the venerable judge, he hoisted up his breeches before the whole assembly, as though he were just rising from a nap, and then, seeing how matters stood, asked where the two plaintiffs had gone, who had been quarreling about the boots and pack-saddles. However, as the two rogues were nowhere in sight, he fell to ranting and vowing by God's bowels that he would determine, for his own

information, whether it was the custom of the Florentines to pull down their magistrates' breeches while they sat on the bench, hearing law-cases. The provost, too, on learning what had happened, raised the devil. But when his friends made him understand that the trick had been played only to show him that the Florentines knew full well that he had brought tatterdemalions with him, instead of judges, in order to cut down expenses, he thought it best to curb his tongue and, for the moment, no more was said about it.



BRUNO and Buffalmacco steal Calandrino's porker, and then persuade him to try to get it back by means of an ordeal of ginger cakes and wine. One after the other, they give him two dog-biscuits prepared with aloes, by means of which Calandrino apparently stands accused. Thereupon, they compel him to pay them a bribe, by the threat of telling everything to his wife.

HARDLY had Filostrato made an end of his story, which had roused them to resounding mirth, than the queen requested Filomena to continue.

Gracious ladies, she began, just as Filostrato was drawn by mention of Maso's name, to tell the story you've been hearing, I've likewise been inspired by the jest of Calandrino and his comrades, to relate another story about them, which I believe you will enjoy.

I needn't tell you who Calandrino, Bruno and Buffalmacco were, for you've already heard enough about them, so I shall proceed without further prelude. You must know that not very far from Florence itself, Calandrino had a bit of property which his wife had brought him with her marriage-portion, and among the various benefits he derived from it, year by year, was a fine porker. Accordingly, it was his custom to go to the country every December, and there slaughter the hog and have it salted.

One year, it happened that Mistress Tessa was not feeling well, whereupon Calandrino went by himself to kill the porker. The circumstance reached the ears of Bruno and Buffalmacco who, on learning that his wife was not going with him, betook themselves to an intimate friend of theirs, a priest who lived near Calandrino's farm, and there settled

down for a few days. The morning of their arrival, Calandrino had just killed the pig, and seeing his friends with the priest, hailed them and said, "Welcome, welcome! Come over and I'll show you what a good husbandman I am!"

Taking them to his house, he showed them the porker. They perceived that it was a fine, fat, succulent fellow which, according to Calandrino, was destined to be salted for him and his family.

"What an idiot you are!" exclaimed Bruno. "Sell it, why don't you, and let's make merry with the proceeds! Then you can tell your wife it was stolen from you."

"I think not," said Calandrino. "She wouldn't believe me, in the first place, and she'd chase me out of the house. Don't trouble yourselves about it, for I'll never do any such thing."

They employed many methods of persuasion, but without success. At last, he invited them to dinner, but so half-heartedly that they did not accept, and went their way.

Said Bruno to Buffalmacco, "What do you say, shall we carry off that porker to-night?"

"But how can we do it?" asked Buffalmacco.

"I've seen to the how of it, already," said his friend, "provided he doesn't move it from where it is now."

"Good! I'm with you. Let's do it," said Buffalmacco. "And why shouldn't we? Then we can enjoy it with our host, the domine."

The parson, too, said he would relish the sport, whereupon Bruno said, "We have to be crafty in this business. You know, Buffalmacco, how stingy Calandrino is, and how eagerly he drinks when someone else pays the bill. Let's call for him and take him to the tavern, where the parson will make believe he's treating us as his friends, and will not allow him to spend a penny. Calandrino will then drink himself senseless, and everything will be simple enough, since he's all alone in the house."

Bruno's suggestion was put into effect. Accordingly, when Calandrino saw that the priest would not permit anyone to pay, he drank with a will, and though he had no need of such ballast, soon loaded himself excellently well. It was well on into the night, when they left the tavern. Calandrino left them without worrying about supper, and going straight home, flung himself upon the bed for

the night, confident that he had bolted the door.

The two friends went out to supper with the domine, and as soon as it was over, provided themselves with certain instruments for breaking into Calandrino's house, and stole thither quietly. On finding the door open, they walked in. Then, taking the pig off its hook, they made off with it to the parson's house, where they set it down and then retired to sleep.

The following morning, when Calandrino's brains were clear of the fumes of wine, he got up and went downstairs. Alas, on looking around, he saw no pig and the door wide open. He ran, hither and thither, asking all and sundry if anyone knew who had made off with the pig, but when he could learn nothing, he set up a howl, "Alas! Alack! Poor me! Miserable me! My pig has been stolen!"

As for Bruno and Buffalmacco, the moment they got up, off they went to Calandrino's house, to hear what he had to say about the pig. "Alas! my friends! Alas!" he cried, almost in tears on catching sight of them, "my precious porker has been spirited away!"

But Bruno drew close to him and whispered, "Well, it is a wonder you were sensible once in your life!"

"Alas! I'm telling the truth!" said Calandrino.

"That's right," Bruno advised him, "shout at the top of your lungs, so that people will think it's really as you say."

Calandrino howled all the louder, "I swear to you, it's really and truly been stolen from me. On my word! I swear!"

"Excellent! Wonderful," applauded Bruno. "That's the way you should go about it. Shout! Shout! Let them all hear, so that it'll seem true!"

"You're driving me to damnation!" bawled Calandrino. "I'm telling you what's what, and still you don't believe me! I swear to you—may I be hanged by the neck, if the pig hasn't been stolen!"

Then cried Bruno, "Heavens! How is it possible? Why, I saw it only yesterday with my own eyes! Would you have me believe it flew away of its own accord?"

"It's just as I say!" insisted Calandrino.

"My Lord!" gasped Bruno. "Can it really be?"

"I should think so!" said Calandrino. "That's

just how it is, and I'm so desperate about it, that I don't know how I'll ever have the nerve to go home again. My wife will not believe it—I take that for granted—and even if she should, I'd not have a moment's peace with her the whole year!"

"It's a pretty serious predicament, God help me—if it's true," replied Bruno. "But only yesterday, Calandrino, I prompted you to say this, and I'd hate to think you're deceiving us, as well as your wife."

Calandrino flew into a fury and railed, "Hell! Why will you exasperate me, and make me curse God and the saints and all that's holy? I tell you my porker was spirited away last night!"

At that, Buffalmacco interposed, "If it is really so, we must see what we can do to get it back again, if there's any chance."

"How can we go about it?" asked Calandrino.

"Surely nobody took the trouble to come all the way from India, to steal your pig," replied Buffalmacco. "It must have been some neighbor of yours. If you could manage to get the folks hereabout together, I know how to put them through the ordeal of bread and cheese, and we'd immediately find out who did the taking."

"A fine suggestion!" mocked Bruno. "Much you'd find out that way, from the crafty fellows of this neighborhood! I'd lay down my head that some one of them has it, but the moment you suggest bread and cheese, he'd see through the ruse and decline to put in an appearance."

"What's to be done, then?" asked Buffalmacco.

"I have a suggestion," replied Bruno. "Perform the ordeal with delicious ginger-cakes and good white wine, and invite them all to drink. They'll never suspect it, and so they'll all come. As for the ginger-cakes, they could be blessed as easily as the bread and cheese."

"That's a great idea," said Buffalmacco. "What do you say, Calandrino? Shall we do it?"

"By all means, do, for God's sake," he said. "If I only knew who had the pig, I'd be half-resigned to the loss."

"So be it, then," said Bruno. "I'm even willing to go so far as Florence, to buy those things for you, if you give me the money."

Calandrino had perhaps some forty shillings on his person, and these he gave Bruno. Immediately,

Bruno betook himself to a friend of his, a spice-dealer in Florence, and bought a pound of dainty ginger-cakes, ordering him to prepare for him two dog-biscuits, mixed with a compound of fresh hepatic aloes. He had them covered with a sugar-icing like the rest, and in order not to confuse or mistake them, had them marked with a little secret sign, by which he could distinguish which was which. Then buying a flask of good white wine, he returned to Calandrino in the country and said:

"It's up to you now to invite all the people you suspect, to have a drink with you to-morrow morning. It's a holiday, and folks will gladly come. As for me, I'll perform the spell on the cakes to-night, with the help of Buffalmacco, and bring them back to your house in the morning. For your sake, I'll even distribute them, and do and say all that's required to be said and done."

Calandrino followed his suggestion, and the next morning he collected about the elm, in front of the village-church, a considerable group of country-folks, and whatever young Florentines happened to be there. Bruno and Buffalmacco presently made their appearance with the box of ginger-cakes and the flagon of wine, and arranging the men in a circle, the former addressed them:

"Gentlemen, it is my duty to inform you why you are assembled here, so that if anything should happen to rouse displeasure, you'll have nothing to blame me for. Last night, Calandrino, here present, was robbed of an excellent fat porker, and he has not been able to find out who took it. Since only some one present could have stolen it, he is giving each of you one of these cakes to eat and some wine to drink, in order to discover the guilty party. I warn you in advance, that whoever has the pig in his possession, will not be able to swallow the cake. Indeed, it will be bitterer than gall in his mouth, and he'll be compelled to spit it out. Therefore, I suggest that in order to avoid the mortification of being found out in this crowd, he had better confess his deed to the domine, and I'll drop the matter right here."

All the men present manifested their willingness to eat the cakes, whereupon Bruno, placing them on line and putting Calandrino with the rest, began at one end, and distributed a cake to each one. On coming to Calandrino, he took one of the dog-bis-

cuits and handed it to him. Immediately, Calandrino put it into his mouth and began to chew; but scarcely had his tongue tasted the bitterness of the aloes, than he spewed out the cake because of its unbearable taste. The men, meanwhile, were watching one another narrowly, to see who would spit out his cake, and as Bruno still went on distributing them, pretending to know nothing of what was going on, he heard someone ask behind him, "Why, what's the meaning of this, Calandrino?"

He quickly turned around, and seeing that Calandrino had spat out his cake, said, "Wait a minute! Maybe he spat it out for some other reason. Come, here's another for you, Calandrino." Taking the second biscuit, he thrust it into Calandrino's mouth, and finished distributing the remaining cakes.

Now if Calandrino had found the first cake bitter, the second was even more so. Still, he was ashamed to spit it out, and kept on chewing it for a while, shedding tears the size of hazel-nuts, so enormous were they! Finally, unable to bear the bitterness any longer, he got rid of the second cake, as he had done the first.

Buffalmacco, meanwhile, was busy pouring out the wine for Bruno and the company, and when all of them saw what was happening, they said with one accord, that Calandrino must have stolen his own porker. Some even went so far as to give him a good piece of their minds. At last, when they had gone and only Bruno and Buffalmacco remained, the latter began:

"I was certain all along that you had stolen your own pig, Calandrino, and wanted to make us believe someone else had taken it, so that you would not have had to treat us to a miserable little drink, out of the profits."

Calandrino, who had not yet got rid of the bitter taste of the aloes, swore again and again that he had not taken the pig; but Buffalmacco still persisted. "Tell us, friend, all joking aside," he said, "how much did you get for it? Six florins, eh?"

Calandrino almost went mad with exasperation, whereupon Bruno took up the strain, "Listen, Calandrino, I want you to know that a certain fellow who ate and drank with us just now, told me you're keeping a young girl here as your mistress, and giving her whatever you can manage to put

away, yes, and that he was sure you had sent her that pig. You've been learning some peculiar tricks, these days. Some time ago you took us gathering black stones, down the banks of the Mugnone, leaving us flat after you had led us on a wild goose-chase, and then trying to make us believe you had found the magic one. Now, by swearing yourself black and blue you think you can convince us that the pig you must have given away or sold, was spirited away from you. But we're used to your tricks, and well aware of them, so you won't be fooling us any more. Well then, to be frank, since we've gone through a world of trouble getting the charm ready for the ordeal, we want you to treat us to a couple pairs of capons, otherwise we'll tell Mistress Tessa the whole story."

Calandrino saw he was wasting his pains, without being believed; therefore, thinking he had had misery enough, and not over-anxious to suffer his wife's temper in the bargain, he gave two braces of capons to the rogues who, after having salted the pork for themselves, went off to Florence with their booty, leaving Calandrino gulled and the poorer for his losses.

THE SEVENTH STORY

A SCHOLAR falls in love with a widow, who has another gallant. She makes the new lover spend a whole winter's night waiting for her in the snow; but he succeeds, by his cunning, in having her remain naked on a tower all during a hot July day, at the mercy of the sun, mosquitoes and hornets.

MUCH amused, the women laughed at the mishaps of poor Calandrino, and they would have been even more amused, had they not felt sorry to see him deprived of his capons, by the same rascals who had stolen his pig; but when the story was over, the queen commanded Pampinea to tell hers, and she began without delay:

Dearest ladies, it often happens that cunning is outwitted by cunning, so that it is foolish to take pleasure in laughing at another's expense. We've had much fun, listening to the pranks which people have played upon one another in many of the foregoing stories, none of which seems to have been indulged in as a sort of retribution. In my story, however, I wish to rouse you to pity, of a just punishment that a woman of our city brought down upon her own head, as a result of a practical joke she played. In-

deed, she nearly lost her life in consequence. Perhaps this tale of mine will not be entirely unprofitable to you, as it may teach you the salutary lesson of being careful of the way you make sport of others.

Not so many years ago, there lived in Florence a young woman called Helen, possessed of a beautiful body, but a snobbish disposition. She came of an excellent family, and had a fair amount of fortune's blessings, so that when her husband died she did not wish to marry again, having set her heart on a handsome, pleasant youth after her own desires. As she had freed herself of all responsibilities, she managed, through the help of a maid in whom she had the utmost confidence, to meet her lover and live with him in wondrous pleasure and delight.

Now at about that time, a young nobleman of our city, called Rinieri, returned to Florence from Paris, where he had studied for many years, not for the purpose of marketing his knowledge at retail, like many others, but for the pure pleasure of learning the first principles and the natures of things—a virtue becoming a gentleman. Here, in his native town, he was held in high esteem, both for his noble blood and his learning, and so lived contented, in the enjoyment of civic pursuits.

However, as we have often observed that the wisest of men fall soonest into the snares of love, so likewise did Rinieri. One day, when he had gone to an entertainment in search of distraction, Helen, in her black widow's weeds, appeared before him, looking so alluring, and, in his opinion, also so rarely beautiful and fascinating, that he could not think of anyone who had ever seemed so marvelous a creature to him. Soon he found himself reflecting that the man to whom God granted the grace of holding her naked in his arms could well consider himself blessed.

Stealing repeated glances at her from the corner of his eye, while bearing in mind that great and precious things are not lightly to be won, he resolved, on the spur of the moment, to spare no pains in gaining her favor, that he might eventually attain her love and finally the unstinted possession of herself.

Meanwhile, the young woman, who did not keep her eyes fixed on a prayer-book, but darted them furtively about out of an exalted opinion of her charms, was quick to mark what men enjoyed look-

ing at her, and perceiving Rinieri, said to herself with a laugh, "I didn't waste my time by coming here to-day, for if I'm not mistaken, I've hooked a fish by the nose."

At that, she flashed her eyes time and again in his direction, trying, to the best of her ability, to make him understand that she was aware of his attention, thinking that the more men she captivated and lured by her beauty, the greater its worth, especially to the man upon whom she had bestowed it, together with her love.

All thoughts of philosophical speculation flew from the learned scholar's mind. Thinking to gain her grace, he set his heart upon her, and learning where she lived, proceeded to walk back and forth past her house, justifying his promenades with flimsy excuses. Helen, for the reason already told, was puffed up with vanity, and pretended to take great pleasure in seeing him about, whereupon the scholar found a way to approach her maid and declare his love, pleading with her to exert all her influence upon her lady, that he might at last win her. The maid was liberal with her promises, and reported everything to her mistress, who listened amid bursts of laughter, and then said:

"Do you want to see this scholar lose all the brains he brought back from Paris? Heigh-ho, let's give him what he's looking for. If he should broach the subject to you again, tell him I'm more ardently in love with him than he is with me, but that I must be very scrupulous of my virtue, so that I may look my peers squarely in the face. That should make him love me all the more, if he's as clever as he pretends to be!"

Ah, poor, foolish little woman! She didn't know, dear ladies, what it means to meddle with scholars!

Well, the maid sought him out and delivered her lady's message, which, for the joy it gave him, made him press his suit even more warmly. He sent many letters and gifts, all of which were accepted, but received no replies but indefinite promises. In this fashion, Helen kept him for a long while in suspense.

In the long run, she had confessed the whole affair to her lover, which had angered him not a little, and pricked him to fits of jealousy; therefore, to prove that he was suspecting her unjustly, she sent her maid to the impassioned Rinieri, with the mes-

sage that so far, since he had assured her of his love, she had not been able to give him any token of her affection, but that during the approaching Christmas holidays, she hoped to have the opportunity of being with him. Indeed, if he wished, the night after Christmas he might wait for her in her courtyard, where she would call for him, as soon as she could manage. Rinieri was as happy as could be, and at the appointed hour, hastened to Helen's house. The maid led him to the court and shut him in, and there he began to wait for his lady.

That evening Helen had sent for her lover, and after they had enjoyed their supper in jollity together she disclosed to him what she intended doing that night, adding, "Now you'll be able to see for yourself how much I loved, and still love the fellow you're so ridiculously jealous of." The lover listened to her with joy in his heart, eager to see the performance of what her words had implied.

As it happened, there had been a heavy snow-storm that day, and everything was covered with a blanket of white, so that the scholar had scarcely begun waiting in the courtyard, before he felt colder than he would have cared to. Nevertheless, he bore it patiently, looking forward to the comfort that would follow.

Soon Helen said to her lover, "Let's go to the bedroom and peep out of the window, to see what your rival is doing, and what he has to say to the maid, whom I sent to speak to him."

They went to a lattice, from which they could look out without being seen, and heard the maid calling down to the scholar from another window, "Rinieri, my mistress is as sorry as can be, for to-night one of her brothers arrived unexpectedly, and kept her talking and talking. Later he invited himself to supper, and he hasn't gone yet, though I think he'll soon be leaving. That's what's been keeping her from coming down to you, but I guess she'll soon manage it. In the meantime, she begs you not to be angry with her for keeping you waiting."

Rinieri believed every word she said was true, and answered, "Tell my lady not to worry about me, until it is convenient for her to come down, but please tell her to do so as soon as she can."

The maid left the window and went to bed, when Helen said to her lover, "Well, what have

you to say? Do you suppose if I loved him as much as you fear, I'd let him remain down there and freeze?"

So saying, she retired with her lover, who was reassured to a certain extent, and for a considerable while they sported and made merry together, laughing and joking at the unhappy scholar's expense.

Meanwhile, the poor fellow was performing all kinds of gymnastics in order to keep himself warm in the open courtyard, with no shelter where he might sit down, or seek refuge from the chill of night. Cursing the brother for delaying the woman so long, he started at every sound, thinking perhaps a door was opening to let him in to her; but he hoped in vain.

Toward midnight, after having frolicked all that time with her lover, Helen said to him, "What do you think of our scholar, sweetheart? And which do you consider greater, his wisdom, or my love for him? Will the cold I'm making him suffer drive out the silly jealousy that entered your heart the other day, because of the words I said of him?"

"O my heart of hearts," replied her lover, "I am convinced that as you are my happiness, my peace, my delight and all my hope, so too, am I yours."

"Well, then, give me a thousand kisses to prove it," she said. Claspings her close in his arms, he gave her not only a thousand, but more than a hundred thousand of them, when, after they had so dallied for sometime, she said, "Come, let's get up awhile and see if those ardent flames are spent, in which this new beau of mine declared he burned the live-long day."

Getting up, they posted themselves at their window, and peering down into the courtyard, caught sight of the scholar who, goaded by the cold, was dancing a jig of so rapid and brisk a tempo, to the tune of his chattering teeth, that never had they seen anything to equal it before.

"What have you to say now, sweetest hope of mine?" Helen then asked her lover. "Don't you think I can make men jig, without the need of horns or bagpipes?"

"O my dearest joy, indeed you can," he said, laughing.

"Let's go down as far as the door," she suggested. "You keep quiet, while I talk to him, and we'll hear what he has to say. Perhaps we'll have just as much fun listening to him, as we had watching his antics."

Opening the door very quietly, they padded down to the threshold, whence, without opening the leaves a crack, Helen softly called to the scholar through the keyhole. Rinieri thanked the Lord, thinking all too hastily that he would be admitted, and drew up to the door.

"Here I am, Helen," said he. "Open, for God's sake. I'm nearly dead with cold."

"Really!" she said. "You must be a coldblooded fellow. Can it be so frightfully cold, just because we've had a miserable little snowfall? As if I didn't know there are far worse ones in Paris! I'm sorry I can't let you in yet, as that plague of a brother of mine, who came to have supper with me to-night, hasn't left yet. But he'll be going soon, and I'll make it my business to let you in right away. You don't know what trouble I had, to slip away from him and come down to beg you not to mind waiting a little longer."

"For the love of God, madam," he pleaded, "please open the door and let me in, that I may at least get out of the cold in there. It's begun to snow very heavily, these last few minutes, and it's still coming down. I'll wait as long as you wish, if you'll only let me in."

"Alas, dear one, that I cannot do," she said. "This door makes a tremendous racket every time it's opened, and my brother would surely hear, if I let you in. I just want to go and tell him it's time for him to leave, so that I may return and open the door for you."

"Go quickly, please," entreated the scholar, "and I beg you let them make a good fire, so I may thaw out a little. I'm so numb with cold, that I can scarcely feel my own touch."

"How can that be?" said Helen. "How, if what you wrote to me so many times is true, about your burning for love of me? Of course you're jesting! Bye-bye, I must go now, but you wait, and be of good cheer."

The lover, who heard every word of their conversation, enjoyed the joke immensely. Presently, he returned to bed with her, but they slept little all of that night, spending it all in frolic and pleasure, and in laughing at the hapless scholar.

Finally Rinieri, who looked almost like a stork, so violently did his teeth chatter, realized he had

been the dupe of a trick. Several times, he tried to force the door open, and looked about for a means of leaving the courtyard, but seeing it could not be done, he paced about like a lion in his cage, cursing the foul weather, the woman's heartlessness and the interminable night, together with his own stupidity. Contempt for her took possession of him, and converted the fervent love he had long borne her, to cruel and bitter hate. He considered all kinds of complex plans to gain revenge, which he now desired more than he had formerly desired to be alone with her.

At great length, the night drew to a close; dawn began to glimmer in the east, and with the new day, down came Helen's maid, well instructed for her office. Opening the door to the court, she said, pretending exaggerated compassion for his plight, "Damn that person who came here last evening! All night long he kept us on pins and needles, and nearly made you freeze to death. But take my advice, bear this disappointment with patience, for what couldn't be done last night will be so much sweeter some other night. I, for one, know nothing in the world that could have vexed my mistress as much as this."

The indignant scholar, grown wise through all the insults he had suffered, knew only too well that threats are the defensive weapons of the threatened, therefore, swallowing the anger his uncontrollable temper would have vented, he replied gently, without the least show of anger in his voice, "I must confess I've spent the most terrible night in my life, but I knew very well your mistress was not at all to blame, as she came down herself out of pity for me; to apologize and cheer my spirits. As you say, what did not happen to-night will be for another night, so give her my best wishes and God be with you."

Then, almost crippled with cold, he made his way to his house as best he could, where, nearly dead with fatigue and lack of sleep, he flung himself upon his bed to snatch a little rest, only to rise a few hours later, with arms and legs well-nigh paralyzed. Immediately, he sent for several doctors, and informing them of the cold to which he had been exposed, placed himself entirely in their care. Still, in spite of their efficient and very powerful remedies, it was some time before they could manage to relieve the numbness of his muscles and sinews, and bring them back to their normal flexibility. Had it not

been for the resistance of his youth, and the coming of more temperate weather, he might have had a most unpleasant time of it. At length, when he regained his health and vigor, he concealed the hatred he nursed in his heart, and pretended he was more passionately in love than ever with his fair widow.

Not long after, fate proved propitious to the scholar, and presented him with the opportunity to satisfy his desire for vengeance; for the youth whom Helen loved, caring little for all her affection, set his heart on another woman, and would have nothing to do or say to his first love, keeping her languishing in tears and vexation. Helen's maid, however, who was devoted to her, seeing no way of rousing her from the despair into which she had sunk at the loss of her lover, conceived a peculiar notion of a way to cure her. Observing Rinieri promenading back and forth as usual about the neighborhood, she thought, since he was a scholar and therefore an expert in black magic, that he might perform some spell, by means of which he could restore the old lover to her lady. Accordingly, she communicated the brilliant idea she had. Helen, by no means clever, without stopping to think that had the scholar known anything of black magic, he would have employed it in his own case, took heed of the maid's words, and sent her immediately, to find out whether Rinieri would be willing to work a charm, assuring him of the coveted reward, if he succeeded. The maid acquitted herself diligently and well of her charge, much to the delight of the scholar, who said to himself on hearing the message, "O God, all praise to Thee. The time has come when with Thy help, I shall be able to make the foul woman pay for the indignity she inflicted upon me, as a reward for the great love I bore her!" But to the maid he said, "Tell my lady not to worry about it, for even if her lover were in India, I could promptly bring him to her feet and make him apologize for whatever he had done contrary to her desires. As for the means she must employ, I will have to communicate them to her myself, whenever and wherever she pleases. Tell her this, and urge her, for me, to bear up and be of good cheer."

The maid carried back his answer, and arranged an appointment for them at Santa Maria del Prato. Thither they went, the lady and the scholar, and

spoke a while alone together. Forgetting that she had once nearly brought him to an untimely end, Helen frankly disclosed her predicament to him, explained what she desired of him, and implored him to do his best for her.

"Madam," said Rinieri, "I must confess that among the things I learned in Paris was the art of necromancy, of which I know all there is to know, backwards and forwards. But since the practice of it is sinful in the sight of the Lord, I had sworn an oath never to use it, either for my sake or for anybody else's. Still, frankly, the love I bear you is so great, that I don't know how I could find it in me to refuse you anything you asked. Therefore, even if I should be damned to hell for this very thing, I am ready, since it is your pleasure. I must warn you, however, that it is a much more difficult thing to perform than you perhaps imagine, especially in cases where a woman wishes to recall a man to her affection, or a man a woman, for this particular spell must be practiced by the individual concerned. Moreover, great courage is necessary, for the person who performs the spell must do it in the depth of night, alone, and in desolate places, all of which I don't imagine you would be willing to consent to."

At that Helen, more infatuated than wise, replied, "Love urges me on so powerfully, that there's nothing I would stop at to recover the man who so unjustly abandoned me. If you please, then, explain to me why I must have courage."

The scholar, who had a bad streak in his nature, accordingly answered, "Madam, I shall have to make you a leaden puppet, in the name of the man whose affection you wish to regain. When you have received it from me, you must go by palest moonlight to a stream of living waters, about the hour when you would ordinarily be falling asleep, and there, all alone, you must bathe yourself seven times in the water, stark-naked, with the leaden image. After that, naked as you are, you must climb up to the top of a tree, or to the roof of some deserted house, and turning toward the north with the puppet in your hand, you must repeat, seven times, a certain incantation, which I'll write out for you. After you've said it over, two of the most beautiful maidens you have ever seen will appear before you, and bow, asking you your wish. Then it is for you to tell them

clearly and explicitly what you desire, and take care you don't mention one man for another. After you've expressed your wish, they'll disappear, and you may go down to the place where you have left your clothes, put them on again and return home. I can safely promise you that before the twelfth hour of the following night your lover will come to you, contrite and weeping, to beg your forgiveness and mercy. And rest assured that from then on, he will never forsake you again for any other woman in the world."

Helen listened intently to what he said, and placed the utmost confidence in his words. Already, she imagined herself clasping her lover in her arms, and half-regaining her spirits, she said, "Don't you worry! I'll carry it all out to perfection, for I have the most convenient spot you can imagine for the purpose. Along the upper border of Val d'Arno, I have a country-place, very close to the river's brink. We're now in the month of July, and bathing will be delightful. Now that I think of it, not very far from the stream, there's a little old deserted tower, which only the shepherds sometimes climb by a ladder of chestnut rungs, to see, from a little platform on the roof, whether they can locate their lost sheep. It's quite a lonely, out-of-the-way place, you see. That's where I'll go, and there, on top of the tower, I hope to carry out perfectly whatever you give me to do."

Rinieri was very well acquainted with the lady's country-home and the abandoned tower she described, and glad of the assurance she had given him of her intention, he said, "Madam, I've never been around that part of the country, so I'm not acquainted with your house or the little tower you speak of; but if everything is as you say, you couldn't find a more adequate spot. Well then, as soon as I can, I shall send you the leaden puppet and the written charm, but I implore you, after you have had your wish, and realize that I have done my best for you, think of me just a little, and keep the promise you made me."

"Indeed I will," she said, and taking leave of him, she returned home.

Rinieri, overjoyed at the favorable prospect of carrying his plan into effect, manufactured an image out of various preparations he had, and composed some meaningless twaddle for a charm. At the first opportunity he sent them to Helen with the injunction

tion that she do what he had told her that very night, without delay, and himself went secretly with his servant, to the house of a friend close by the tower, that he might more successfully execute his scheme.

Helen, on the other hand, set out for her farm with her maid, and at nightfall, pretending she was going to retire, sent the girl to bed. About the hour she usually went to sleep, however, stealing cautiously out of the house, she walked to the brink of the river Arno, at the foot of the little tower, and after reassuring herself by scanning the vicinity that no one was about, she took off her clothes and hid them under a bush. Seven times, she bathed with the leaden puppet, and then, still holding it in her hand, went on toward the tower.

Rinieri, meanwhile, with the first shades of night, had concealed himself with his servant, among the willows and other trees growing near the tower, and had seen everything she did. As he perceived her passing by, almost brushing against him, her gleaming white nakedness dominating the darkness of night, and as he gazed at her breasts and the other parts of her body, well-formed and beautiful, he felt a twinge of pity for her, to think of what would become of them before long. As though that were not enough, the desire of the flesh pricked him instantly, making a certain person start up who had been quiescent, and spur him to leave his ambush, seize her and have his will of her. What with this urge and that, he was on the point of surrendering; but then, remembering who he was, and what the insult he had suffered for no reason at her hands, his ire kindled anew. Pity and passion were flung overboard; he remained staunch to his resolution, and let her pass.

Accordingly, Helen climbed to the tower, and turning to the north began repeating the charm Rinieri had given her. Presently, he glided softly into the tower after her, and stealthily took away the ladder which led up to the platform where she stood. Then, with bated breath, he waited to see what she would say and do.

Seven times, Helen repeated the incantation and waited for the beautiful maidens to come. However, so long did she have to wait in the dampness of the night air, which was more chilly than she would have desired, that at last she saw dawn lighting up the

east. Chagrined and disappointed that the affair had not turned out as the scholar had said, she pondered:

"I'm afraid our fine gentleman may have wanted to give me a dose of my own medicine, in return for the night I had him spend. But if that's the way he meant to do it, he's accomplished a weak revenge, for this night was not a third the length of his; besides, the cold was of another sort entirely."

Not over-anxious to have the dawn surprise her on the tower, she tried to descend, but found the ladder was no longer there. Then, as if the world had slipped from under her feet, she lost courage and fainted on the platform, only to weep and wail and complain bitterly when she regained her senses. She knew too well that this had been the scholar's doing, and compunction seized her, first, for having offended him, and then, for having placed too much confidence in a man whom she should have deemed her enemy, for cogent reasons; so she continued for a long time. Later, examining the tower to see if there might be any other way of going down, and finding none, she began her lamenting afresh and plunged into bitter thoughts, musing:

"O unfortunate wretch! What will your brothers say, and your relatives, and your neighbors and everybody in Florence, when they learn you were found here stark-naked? The wonderful reputation you have heretofore enjoyed will be discovered to have been a sham, and even if you tried to gloss over the whole affair with plausible excuses—that is, if you can trump up any—that damned scholar who knows all your business, will give you the lie! Ah, unhappy wretch, fated to lose the youth you loved unwisely, and your honor, at one blow!"

After her soliloquy, she was overcome by so deep a paroxysm of despair, that she would have flung herself headlong from the tower. The sun had already risen, however, and as she crawled nearer to the wall on one side of the tower, to see if some shepherd-lad were passing with his flocks, that she might send him to her maid, she spied the scholar who had just awakened from a desultory nap at the foot of a bush. He caught sight of her at the same moment, and said: "Good-day, madam. Have the maidens arrived yet?"

On seeing him and hearing his words, Helen burst into sobs once more, entreating him to come

into the tower, so that she might speak to him. He complied courteously; therefore the woman, lying flat on her stomach upon the floor of the tower, and allowing only her head to appear through the trap-door, addressed him between her sobs:

"Ah, Rinieri, surely, if I had you spend a wretched night, you have been sufficiently avenged, for even though it is the month of July, all night long I thought I should freeze, naked as I was. What's more, I've cried so long over the trick I played you, and over my stupidity in placing my faith in you, that it's a wonder to me I have any eyes left. I beg you, therefore, not for my sake, whom you've no reason to love, but for your own, as an honorable gentleman, that you consider this sufficient retaliation for my insult to you. Send someone for my clothes, that I may come down from here, and don't insist on robbing me of that which you could not give me back, even if you wished—my honor, Rinieri. Even if I did deprive you of the pleasure of being with me that night, I can compensate you with many more nights for that one, any time you choose. Let this punishment suffice you, then, and like the courteous gentleman you are, be satisfied with the triumph of having avenged your honor, and making me admit it. Don't strive to use your power against a mere woman. It's no glory for an eagle to have triumphed over a dove. For the love of God, then, Rinieri, and for your honor's sake, have mercy on me."

Rinieri still bore the indignity he had received in his proud mind, and when he saw Helen weeping and entreating, he at once felt pleasure and vexation—pleasure in his revenge, which he had wanted more than anything else, and vexation for the pity his humanity awakened in his breast, at the plight of the hapless woman. Still, humanity could not conquer his fierce desire for revenge, and he replied:

"Helen, if my prayers, which, indeed, I had not the heart to bathe in tears or coat with sweetness like yours—if my prayers, I say, had been able to move you to grant me a sheltered corner, the night I was dying of cold in your snow-filled courtyard, I might perhaps find it easy to grant you your own. But now, if you are so much more tender of your honor than you were in the past, and find it so mortifying to remain up there naked, address your prayers to the

one in whose arms you did not blush to lie naked, that particular night you remember, though you knew me to be wearing a path in your courtyard, my teeth chattering as I stamped down the snow. Let him help you now. Let him fetch you your clothes. Let him set up the ladder for you to come down. Inspire him now with some regard for your honor—the man with whom you did not worry about sullying it, on that occasion and a thousand others! Why aren't you calling upon him to come and help you? Whose concern is it, if not his? You belong to him. Whom can he protect and help, if he does not protect and help you? Call him, foolish woman! Find out if the love you bear him, if his wisdom and yours combined can deliver you from my stupidity, of which, as you played with him, you asked, 'Which do you think greater, his wisdom, or the love I bear you?' Nor need you be generous now with what I don't desire, and which you could not refuse me, if I did. Keep your nights for your lover, if you should manage to get out of here alive. Let them be yours and his to enjoy. I had too much of one, and it's enough for me to have been duped once.

"Moreover, employing all your guile in your speech, you strive to worm your way to my benevolence by flattery, calling me courteous, and a gentleman, thinking that thus you will succeed in making me take refuge in my generosity of soul, and so refrain from punishing you for your wickedness. But your arts will not blind the eyes of my mind, as your lying promises did in the past. I know myself now, and truly, in all my stay in Paris, I did not learn so much about myself, as you taught me in the one night you gave me. Still, granting I were indeed generous of soul, you're not the sort toward whom magnanimity should be exercised. The aim of punishment and vengeance toward a wild beast like you, should be death; the generosity you mentioned, ought to be reserved for human-beings alone. Hence, as I am no eagle nor you a dove, but the venomous serpent I know you to be, it is my purpose to carry out my revenge against you, my ancient enemy, with all the hate and power in me, though properly speaking, what I am doing to you can hardly be called revenge, but a just retribution. Revenge should overstep the indignity, whereas this punishment hardly compares with it. Indeed, if it were revenge I sought,

your life would scarcely suffice, considering the depths to which you plunged my soul. No, nor a hundred lives like yours, for in killing you I'd only be ridding the world of a foul, wicked, jaded, insignificant slut. Besides, omitting your merely pretty face, which a few years will ruin with their harvest of wrinkles, what the devil are you, more than any other miserable little slattern? Whereas, it was not through any fault of yours that you failed to murder an honorable gentleman, as you called me a moment ago, whose life may still prove to be of more value to the world in a single day, than a hundred thousand of your lives, as long as the world is destined to last. I'll teach you, through the suffering and humiliation you are now enduring, what it means to ridicule men of feeling, and scholars in particular. I'll give you food for thought, which will keep you from ever being so foolish again, if you live to tell the tale.

"Then, again, if you're so anxious to come down, why don't you pitch yourself headlong to earth? Perhaps by breaking your neck, God willing, you would be getting out of the torment in which you think you find yourself, and at the same time, you would be making me the happiest man in the world. That's all, for the present. I contrived to the best of my ability to get you up there; it's up to you to use the same ingenuity in coming down that you expended in making a fool of me."

While the scholar was delivering his harangue, the miserable woman did not cease weeping. Time sped by and the sun kept climbing higher in the heavens. When she saw Rinieri had come to a halt, she said:

"Ah, cruel man, if you found that accursed night so hard to bear, and my sin so grievous that neither the beauty of my youth, nor my humble prayers can move you to pity, at least let one thing touch you and soften your unrelenting harshness—the confidence I bore you. Yes, my faith in you, that made me bare my heart to you of its every inmost secret, and paved a way for your vengeance to make me conscious of my error. Had I not unbosomed myself to you, nothing in the world would have given you the occasion to vent your revenge upon me, which you seem to have yearned for so ardently! Come, away with your grudge and forgive me, and I promise that if you do, and allow me to come down from here, I am willing to

give up my faithless youth completely, and take you alone for my lord and lover—yes, in spite of your apparent scorn for the beauty which you claim is so transient and worthless. Still, whatever its worth in comparison with other women's charms, one thing I know: it has at least the merit, if nothing else, of being the delight and joy and rapture of man's youth, and you are by no means old. Besides, even though I am so cruelly maltreated at your hands, I can't believe you would want to see me die the unbecoming death you suggest. No, you would not have me fling myself down from here, like a miserable wretch before your eyes which, if you were not the liar you've recently become, you would admit once took great joy in me. For pity's sake, and for the sake of God above, have mercy on me! The sun is beginning to burn fiercely, and causes me as great suffering as the cold I bore through the night."

Rinieri enjoyed the sport of the conversation, and replied, "It was not through any love you had for me, Helen, that you trusted me with your confidence, but only to win back what you had lost—a thing which, if anything, deserves still harsher punishment. You are sorely mistaken if you think that was the only way that offered itself to the execution of my revenge. There were a thousand others—a thousand snares I had wound about your feet, through my pretense of love for you, and sooner or later, if this opportunity had not come, you would have been caught in one or another of them. Indeed, you couldn't have been caught in any other that wouldn't have caused you even more suffering and humiliation than this—which I seized, not out of any regard for you, but to be sooner appeased. Nevertheless, even if all ways had failed me, my pen would not, with which I would have written so many, and such terrible attacks against you, that when you learned of them, as you doubtless would have, you would have cursed a thousand times a day the hour you were born.

"The pen is far mightier than is imagined, by people who have not discovered its power from personal experience. I swear by God—may He rejoice to the end in this revenge on you, as He did in the beginning!—I swear by Him, that I would have penned such things of you that in your shame not only before others, but before yourself, you would

have plucked out your eyes with your own hands, rather than look at yourself again! So don't rebuke the sea for having been increased by a tiny brook.

"As for your love and your favors, I don't care a straw for them, as I told you before. Give yourself, if you can, to the man who once possessed you, the rival whom I once hated, as I now love him for the way he behaved toward you recently.

"It is usual with you women to give your hearts to lusty youths, and hanker after their passion, because you see them rosier of complexion, darker of beard, and with more zest for dancing and sporting. All these virtues once also graced men of maturer years, who are, besides, past-masters in what those youngsters have yet to learn. Again, you consider them better gallopers and adepts in making more miles in a day than older men. I admit they're more brisk in shaking up your hide for you; but elderly men, rich in experience, know far better where the flea bites. Therefore, it is much more preferable to choose the little and sweet, rather than the much and tasteless. Besides, rough-riding will tire and get anybody out of wind, no matter how young, whereas slow and sure pacing will lead one to the shelter in good form, though perhaps a little late. You don't realize, brainless animals that you are, how much harm is hidden under that trifle of fine exterior. Young men are never satisfied with one woman. Not at all! They will desire every female they set eyes on, and think the world owes everything to them. Under such conditions, their love could not possibly be constant, as you can convincingly testify from your own case. They esteem themselves worthy of their women's respect and adoration, and there's no greater glory for them than to boast of the conquests they have made—a bad trait, which has caused many a woman to seek refuge under the gown of the friars, who know how to keep their mouths shut.

"Although you declare nobody ever knew of your intrigues, except your maid and me, you are under sore misapprehension and guilty of false assurance if you believe it. Why, his neighborhood and yours talk of nothing else! But then, as often happens, the one concerned is the last to hear what's said of him! Disregarding this, youths take from you, whereas mature men give. You, who have chosen so badly, then, stick to the fellow to whom

you gave yourself, and leave me, the object of your jibes, to others—for I have found a lady much nobler than you, who recognized my worth better than you ever did!

"You didn't seem to understand my words aright, when I spoke of what I'd like to see you do. If you want to bear convincing proof to the other world of my desire, just fling yourself down, and then your soul, which I am sure will fall directly into the devil's arms, may see for itself whether I winked a lash seeing you tumble to your death. But I know you do not want to do me this pleasant favor, therefore accept this bit of advice. When the sun begins to scorch you too fiercely, think of the cold you made me bear, and I'm sure that if you mingle it with your smart, you will find the sun's heat to be much assuaged."

The woeful Helen wept anew to hear the scholar's words end in cruel sarcasm, and said, "Hear me, then! Since nothing I can do stirs you to compassion, be moved by the love you bear this lady who, you say, is so much better than myself, and who loves you. For her sake, forgive me and bring my clothes, that I may dress. And oh, let me come down from here!"

Rinieri laughed at that, but seeing that it was already long past nine, answered, "I can't very well refuse you now, since you have made your appeal by so beloved a lady. Tell me where your clothes are, and I will fetch them and help you come down from there."

Helen was somewhat cheered, believing he meant what he said, and showed him where she had hidden her clothes. Rinieri, however, on leaving the tower, cautioned his servant not to leave the spot, but to keep as close to it as he could, and to do his best to prevent anyone from entering the tower, until he himself had returned. Shortly after that, he went to his friend's house, dined in ease and comfort, and then, at the proper hour, took his siesta.

Meanwhile, Helen remained upon her tower. Though somewhat comforted by ill-founded hope, she drew near the section of the battlement where a patch of shade fell, and there, sad beyond measure and the prey of bitterest thoughts, she crouched upon her haunches, and resigned herself to wait. Thought followed thought in quick succession. Then, think-

ing gave way to hope and hope to despair of his returning with her clothes, until at last, overcome by her sorrow and the fatigue of a wakeful night, she sank into a profound sleep.

By this time, the intensely hot sun had risen to its noon. Glaring and merciless, it beat down upon her tender body, upon her head, unprotected by any covering, and with such violence, that not only did it scorch her flesh wherever it was exposed to its beams, but little by little blistered and split it. The agonizing smart awoke her, though she was sleeping soundly, and feeling the heat of the sun, she tried to move farther away. Then it was as though all the skin of her body were cracking and bursting with the motion, like scorched parchment when someone pulls it. As if that were not enough, her head ached so that she thought it would split, which was indeed no wonder. The platform of the tower, too, was so scorching hot, that she could scarcely bear to find foothold or rest, so that unable to sit or to stand still, she was compelled to move about as she wept. No breeze stirred the torrid air. Flies and hornets, lured by her raw flesh, came there in swarms, and gathering on her bruised body, bit her so cruelly, that each sting was like a stab. In despair, she flapped her hands to chase the insects away, cursing herself, her life, her lover and the scholar every moment of her torment.

Finally, what with the indescribable heat of the sun, the mosquitoes, the hornets, hunger, and worst of all, a suffocating thirst, not to mention myriad maddening thoughts that stung and goaded and tormented her, Helen jumped to her feet to scan the horizon and listen for any human sound, determined to call for help, no matter what the outcome. But alas! even this unfriendly fate denied her! Hardly any of the peasants had gone to work that day, most of them being occupied with threshing their grain near their cottages, while the few who had ventured out had all returned home because of the merciless heat. Therefore, only the chirping of the cicadas reached Helen's ears, and the river Arno was the only moving thing she saw, whose inviting waters did not allay, but rather intensified her thirst. Here and there, too, she made out patches of forest, and green shady nooks, and houses, all of which were an added sting to tantalize her.

What more shall we say of the hapless woman? The sun above her, and the fire of the tower-floor beneath her feet, together with the stings of flies and hornets from all quarters, had so disfigured her, that though the previous night the candor of her body had dominated the surrounding gloom, she had now become so red and inflamed and flecked with blood, that to look at her, one would have thought her the ugliest creature in the world.

As time crawled by and Helen continued in her misery, without hope or a friendly word, and awaiting certain death, the scholar awoke from his nap toward mid-afternoon, and calling his lady to mind, went back to the tower to see what had become of her, and, at the same time, relieve his servant, who was still fasting. Helen heard him. Weak and aching from the agony she had suffered, she dragged herself to the edge of the trapdoor and crouching over it, spoke to him, in the midst of her wailing:

"O Rinieri, you have had your revenge, and more, for if I made you freeze in my courtyard at night, you've caused me to roast on this tower to-day—broil, I might say, besides making me die of hunger and thirst. I beseech you, for the sake of the One true God, come up here to me. I am not brave enough to take my life. Kill me, out of mercy, for there's nothing I desire more than the relief of death, so awful is the anguish I feel! If you will not grant this boon, send me at least a bowl of water to moisten my parched mouth, for my tears are not enough to assuage the drought and the fire I feel in it!"

The scholar heard from her voice how weak she was, and also caught a glimpse of her body, all scorched and burned by the sun. A twinge of compassion softened him toward her at the sight and at the humble prayers she addressed to him. Nevertheless, he replied:

"You'll never die by my hands, vile woman that you are! You're welcome to take your own life, if you're so anxious to die! As for water to relieve your heat, you'll have as much of it from me, as I had fire from you to soothe the cold I suffered. There's only one thing I regret. While I had to doctor the sickness resulting from my chill with the warmth of stinking dung, your smarts will be treated with cooling applications of rose-water; and whereas I was on the verge of losing the use of my limbs, my

life itself, you will come out of this flaying even more beautiful, like a serpent that has sloughed off its old skin."

"Alas, unhappy me!" cried Helen. "To my enemies may God give beauty purchased at such a price! But you, Rinieri, crueller than a wild beast—how can you bear to torture me like this? Even if I had put to death everyone near and dear to you, under the most atrocious tortures, what greater cruelty could I have expected from you, or any other man? I can't conceive what worse punishment could be inflicted on a traitor who had caused the slaughter of a townful of people, than the pain to which you are subjecting me, by having the sun broil my body and the flies devour it. Not even a bowl of water will you grant me, when murderers sentenced by law are often given wine, if they wish, as they are led to their death!"

"Well then, since I see there's no swerving you from your ruthless cruelty, since my woes cannot touch the least fibre of your heart, I shall resign myself patiently to accept death. So may the Lord have mercy on my soul! And may He look with unprejudiced eyes upon this deed of yours!"

With these words, she crawled painfully to the middle of the roof, despairing of ever escaping with her life from the raging heat. In the stress of her many afflictions, not once, but a thousand times, she thought she would faint for very thirst, as she wept aloud and bewailed her misfortune.

It was already dusk by now. Rinieri, thinking he had punished her enough, had his servant wrap her clothes in his cloak, and he himself went to her house. There he found Helen's maid sitting upon the doorstep, sad and forlorn, not knowing what on earth to do.

"What's happened to your mistress, girl?" he asked.

"I don't know at all, sir," she replied. "This morning I expected to find her in bed, where I thought I saw her go last night, but I found her neither there nor anywhere else. I haven't any idea what's become of her. You can't imagine how miserable I am! Perhaps you could tell me something about her, sir?"

"Ah," exclaimed the scholar, "if I had only had you, with your mistress, where I've been keeping

her, so I might have punished you for your part in the game, as I punished her for hers! But you won't escape my clutches, I swear, until I've given you all you deserve! Ah, no! You won't be playing any more pranks on men, I assure you, without first thinking of me!"

So saying, he turned to his servant. "Give her those clothes," he said, "and tell her to fetch her mistress if she wants to."

The man did as he was told. When the girl recognized whose clothes they were, and heard what the scholar had said, she was so terrified at the thought that they might have murdered her mistress, that she could scarcely contain a shriek. The moment Rinieri had gone, she ran with the bundle to the tower, weeping and moaning.

It so happened that one of Helen's gardeners had lost two of his pigs that day, and as he was going hither and thither looking for them, he came upon the tower, shortly after the scholar's departure. As he looked through every nook and cranny to see if he could discover his pigs, he heard the wailing of the hapless woman, and climbing aloft as far as he could, called out, "Who's that crying up there?"

Helen recognized her gardener's voice, and calling him by his name pleaded, "For heaven's sake, please run for my maid, and see that you manage to have her come up here to me!"

The man knew her to be his mistress. "Goodness, madam!" he cried. "What the devil brought you all the way up there? Your girl's been looking high and low for you all day long, but who would ever have thought you'd be way up there?"

Taking the side-beams of the ladder, he set them up in place, and got to work fastening the rungs across with ropes. At this point, the maid came into the tower, and unable to repress her anxiety any longer, began striking and tearing at herself with her hands, shrieking, "O, my mistress! My darling mistress! Where are you?"

No sooner did Helen hear her, than she answered as loudly as she could, "Here, I'm up here, sister! Don't cry, but bring up my clothes to me as soon as you can."

The girl was relieved to hear her lady's voice, and climbing the ladder, which the laborer had almost entirely fixed up again, she came to the plat-

form with his aid. But on seeing her mistress lying there on the roof naked, exhausted and haggard, looking more like a charred stump than a human creature, she fell to tearing her face with her nails, and mourned over her as though she were dead.

"For God's sake keep quiet and help me dress," said Helen, who, learning from her that nobody knew where she had been except the men who had delivered her clothes, and the gardener, was somewhat consoled. She begged them not to breathe a word of the event to a living soul. Finally, after a good deal of talk, the gardener took Helen, who was unable to move, and carried her safely out of the tower; but the poor maid, who had remained behind, coming down with less caution, missed her footing and fell from the ladder to the ground, breaking her leg, the pain of which set her roaring like a lion. Laying his mistress on a patch of grass, the gardener ran to see what ailed the maid, and on finding her with a broken leg, took her likewise to the patch of grass and set her down beside the lady. When Helen saw this new misfortune added to the sum of her woes, and realized that the one from whom she expected most help had broken her leg, she wept still more in sheer desperation, so that the gardener was not only powerless to comfort her, but himself joined in the lamentation.

The sun was already low on the horizon. That darkness might not overtake them in that desert place, he went to his cot at Helen's suggestion, whence, recruiting two of his brothers and his wife, he returned to the grass-patch with a board, on which they laid the maid and so carried her home with them. They refreshed Helen with a cool draught, and comforted her with cheery words; then the gardener took her on his back, and carried her to his wife's room, where she fed her gruel, undressed her and put her to bed. That night they managed to carry her and the girl back to Florence.

Once there, Helen, who had fables and wiles galore at her beck and call, fabricated a plausible tale which had nothing in common with what had really occurred, and gave her brothers to understand, as well as her sisters and everyone else, that both she and her maid had suffered what they did through devilish witchcraft.

Doctors were sent for at once, and finally, not

without excruciating pain and torment on the part of Helen, who more than once left her skin piece-meal on the bedsheets, they cured her of a fierce fever and other ailments, and likewise the maid of her broken leg.

The lesson drove all thoughts of her lover out of Helen's mind, and from then on she took judicious care not to trifle with people and love. As for the scholar, on hearing that the maid had broken her leg, he was satisfied with what he thought a complete, well-rounded vengeance, and went his way without another word.

These, then, are the returns the ill-advised young woman received for her folly, when she thought she could jest with a scholar as with any ordinary man, little knowing that scholars—I don't say all, but the majority of them—know where the devil's tail springs from. Take care of playing foolish pranks, then, ladies, especially on scholar-folk.



SPINELLOCCIO and Zeppa are close friends. The former lies with the wife of the latter, who discovers it and contrives to shut the offender in a chest. There, while Spinellocchio is imprisoned, he dallies over his head with the former's wife.

THE narrative of Helen's woes had been hard and distressing for the women to hear, still, when they considered that to a great extent she had brought her punishment on her own head, they glided over it with milder pity, though they looked upon the scholar as a fearfully harsh, stubborn, yes, even cruel man. However, when Pampinea had brought her story to a close, the queen called on Fiammetta to continue, who, eager to obey, began:

Adorable ladies, since, as I believe, the indignant scholar's harshness seems to have crushed you somewhat, I think it might be wise to cheer your downcast spirits with something in a lighter vein; so I shall tell you a short tale, of a young man who took an affront with more docility and avenged it with greater temperance—all of which should serve to show that in cases of revenge, the injured party should be content to give as good as he receives, without seeking to overstep the proper bounds of just requital.

As I heard some time ago, there once lived in

Siena two young men of good urban origin, both fairly comfortably situated, one of whom was called Spinelloccio Tanena and the other Zeppa di Mino. They were neighbors in Camollia, and went about together a great deal, so that to all intents and purposes they were as devoted to each other as though they had been brothers—even more so. Besides, each of them had a very comely wife.

Now Spinelloccio was a frequent visitor at his friend's house at all times of the day, whether Zeppa was at home or not, and in the course of time, he struck up such a close intimacy with his wife, that he even lay with her, keeping up the amorous relation a long time before anyone became aware of it. But at length, one day while Zeppa happened to be at home, unbeknown to his wife, Spinelloccio came to call for him.

"He's not in," Zeppa's wife called to him from the parlor, whereupon Spinelloccio, joining her there and seeing she was alone, threw his arms about her and kissed her heartily, receiving a kiss in return for every one he gave. Zeppa, who saw what was going on before his eyes, did not dare to breathe, but remaining in his unintentional hiding-place, waited to see what would follow this sport. Soon, he saw his wife and Spinelloccio, still in each other's arms, make for the bedroom and lock themselves in. He was mad with rage, but then, reflecting that whether he stamped or fumed or carried on in any other fashion, the scandal would not be mitigated, but on the other hand might become even more shameful, he wondered what revenge he could take which would soothe his wounded spirits, and still be a secret from gossiping neighbors. After long reflection, he thought he had hit upon what promised to be the best way, and remained in his hiding-place as long as Spinelloccio stayed with his wife. As soon as the lover was out of the house, however, Zeppa went into the bedroom and found his wife had not yet readjusted her coif, which Spinelloccio had torn off in the sport.

"What's that you're doing, wife?" he asked.

"Can't you see?" she replied.

"Yes, indeed I can," he said, "and I saw much more besides than I could wish!" Then and there, he confronted her with what he had seen, until in her great dread, the woman confessed what she could

not easily have denied, concerning her intimacy with Spinelloccio. Weeping and wailing, she begged his forgiveness, and Zeppa said:

"You must realize you've done a wicked thing, wife, and if you want my forgiveness, you must carry out in every detail what I am going to have you do. Listen, you must tell Spinelloccio that tomorrow, at about nine o'clock, he must find some excuse to leave me, and come here to you. When I'm sure he's here, I shall come back, and the moment you hear me, have him hide in this chest and lock him in. After that, I'll tell you what else to do. And don't be afraid to carry out what I say, for I give you my word I'll not hurt a hair of his head."

To satisfy him, the woman said she would execute his orders, which she did. The following day, when Zeppa and Spinelloccio were together about nine o'clock, the latter, who had promised his mistress a visit at that hour, said to his friend, "I'm sorry, Zeppa, but to-day I'm to have dinner with a friend, and I don't want to keep him waiting, so good-bye."

"It won't be dinner-time for quite a while yet," said Zeppa.

"Oh, that's all right," the other assured him. "I've a certain business to talk over with him, so I'd better get there early."

He left him, therefore, and taking a stroll around the square, went to his mistress, both of them retiring to the bedroom. They had hardly gone in when Zeppa returned, whereupon the woman, feigning the utmost terror, had her lover scramble into the chest her husband had designated, locked him in, and went out of the room.

"Is it time to eat yet, wife?" asked Zeppa, coming upstairs.

"Right away," she said.

"Spinelloccio had a dinner engagement with a friend to-day," he continued, "and has left his wife all alone. Go to the window and call her, and invite her to have dinner with us."

Fear for herself had rendered the woman a model of obedience, and without question, she did as he told her, coaxing Spinelloccio's wife, and urging her so well, that on learning her husband was dining out, she accepted the invitation. The moment she arrived, Zeppa greeted her effusively, took her

familiarly by the hand, and softly ordering his wife into the kitchen, led her to the bedroom, where they had no sooner entered than turning about, he locked the door from within.

"Gracious, Zeppa! What does this mean?" she cried on observing his tactics. "Is that why you had me come here? And is this the great love and true friendship you bear my husband?"

Zeppa did not let her go, but approaching the chest in which her husband was concealed, said to her, "Before you protest, my friend, listen to what I have to tell you. I have always cherished Spinelloccio as a brother, and I still do. But yesterday, unknown to him, I discovered that the faith I placed in him bore such fruit that I found him lying with my wife, as he does with you. Now since he is very dear to me, I don't intend to punish him more than his offense deserves. He's had my wife, and I intend to have you. If you're not willing, I'm afraid I'll have to catch him red-handed, and as I've no mind to leave my revenge unfulfilled, I'll give him such a taste of his own medicine, that neither you nor he will ever have a moment's joy again."

On learning the state of affairs, and after being reassured of the truth again and again, she believed Zeppa and said, "Well, friend, since this vengeance will have to fall on me, I'm willing, provided you manage to keep your wife on friendly terms with me, despite what we're about to do, as I intend to be with her, in spite of the injury she has done me."

"Of course I'll do that," he said, "and in the bargain I'll give you a finer and more precious jewel than any you may have."

With these words, he embraced and kissed her, and throwing her upon her back on the chest wherein her husband was imprisoned, he enjoyed her to his heart's content, and she him.

Spinelloccio, in the meantime, had heard from within the chest all that Zeppa had told his wife, and her answer as well; but later, when he was aware of the antic hay carried on over his head, and for so long a time, at that, he was so angry, that he thought he would die on the spot. Indeed, had he not been afraid of Zeppa, he would have hurled the vilest imprecations upon his slut of a wife, chest or no chest. But when he realized that he had been the first to give offense, and that Zeppa was perfectly

justified in doing what he was doing, in truth, that he had behaved toward him like a merciful man and loyal comrade, he made up his mind to be greater friends with him than ever, provided he wished it.

After Zeppa had been with his friend's wife as long as he desired, he got off the chest, and upon her asking him for the promised jewel, he merely opened the bedroom-door to admit his wife, who had nothing to say but, "Well, dear neighbor, you've turned the tables on me," and that, with a laugh.

"Open the chest," Zeppa bade her, which she did, whereupon he showed the woman her precious Spinelloccio.

It would be difficult to say which of the two was the more mortified, Spinelloccio on confronting Zeppa, and conscious that his friend was aware of his guilt, or his wife, on seeing her husband, and knowing that he had heard and felt how she had served him, over his head.

"Here's the jewel I give you," said Zeppa to her.

Spinelloccio climbed out of the chest, and without wasting words said, "We're even now, Zeppa, and as you just said to my wife, I think we should continue being as good friends as ever. Our wives are the only things we have that we don't share. Well, let's do so, from now on, and be done with it."

Zeppa was satisfied, and so the four had a good dinner together to seal the pact. From that day forward, each of the two women had two husbands, and each man two wives, with never a word or quarrel among them to mar their common joy.

THE NINTH STORY

MASTER Simon, the doctor, inveigled by Bruno and Buffalmacco to go to a certain place one night, on a pretense of being initiated into a secret band of rangers, is thrown by Buffalmacco into a cess-pool, and left to get out of it as best he can.

AFTER the women had carried on a little discussion on the joint ownership of wives instituted by the two young men of Siena, the queen, who was the only one left to speak, began, so that she would not be infringing on Dioneo's privilege:

In my opinion, loving ladies, Spinelloccio certainly deserved the lesson Zeppa taught him, and therefore I don't believe Zeppa is to be harshly judged,

since, as Pampinea demonstrated a little while ago, a man is not to be blamed if he punishes people who deserve, or seek out trouble. Spinelloccio deserved what he got, and I am going to tell you the story of a man who brought his punishment upon himself. I firmly believe the men who gave him what he sought are rather to be praised than blamed. The gull himself was a doctor, who went to the schools of Bologna an ass, and returned all befurred with dignity.

We've had occasion to observe every day, how the people of our city come back from Bologna in the long, wide gowns of judges, doctors, lawyers, all bedecked with scarlet and murrey, and tricked out with other pompous pretensions. We've also had a chance to notice from our daily experience, how the appearance belies what is actually behind it.

Now among these birds of fine feather, a certain Master Simon da Villa, richer in worldly inheritances than native mother wit, came back not so long ago, a full-fledged doctor of medicine—at least, so he styled himself, as he displayed a great scarlet gown and a huge, furred doctor's cap—and took up his residence in a street which nowadays we call Cucumber Row. This newly returned doctor had many odd habits, among them a peculiar way of asking anyone who was with him all kinds of questions about chance passersby, and storing the details in his memory, as though the medicines he gave his patients were to be compounded of these odd scraps of information.

Of the many individuals he saw, two neighbors of his particularly struck his notice, the inseparable companions, Bruno and Buffalmacco, the painters whom we've already mentioned twice to-day. As he studied them, and observed that they seemed to have no cares in the world, and to live as gayly as could be, which was indeed the case, he asked various informants concerning their circumstances. On learning from all sources they were both poor artists, a strange notion entered his mind. It was impossible, he thought, for them to be leading such merry lives on their meagre earnings. They were clever, crafty fellows, as everyone told him. Surely they must have some secret source of income, unknown to the world at large, from which they must derive tremendous profits. The thought made him itch to strike up an

acquaintance with them both, if he could, or at least with one of them. As it happened, he became friendly with Bruno.

It did not take the artist more than a few interviews to discover that this doctor was a veritable donkey, and soon he derived the finest sport in the world from observing his peculiar antics. The doctor, too, greatly enjoyed his new friend's company, and thinking that because he had invited the artist to dinner several times, he could therefore pry into his business and discuss his private affairs, he confessed to him his wonder at the gay life he and Buffalmacco led, though so poor, ending by begging him to let him into their secret.

Bruno listened to the doctor, and thinking the request was none other than a bit of his usual impertinent nonsense, laughed and decided to give him the answer his stupidity deserved.

"Doctor," he said, "there aren't many people to whom I'd confess how we manage to live as we do. But I'll make no pretense about telling you, since you're a friend of mine and wouldn't think of betraying my confidence. It's true Buffalmacco and I live as gayly as you see—more so, in fact, though if we depended on our art, or the income of any of our bits of property, we wouldn't even be able to afford the water we use. But I don't want you to think for a moment that we go breaking into people's houses. We simply go bush-ranging, and without doing anybody harm, we take whatever we like or need. That explains why we live as merrily as you see, without a care in the world!"

The doctor did not quite grasp what he meant. Nevertheless, he swallowed the story whole, marveling at the wonder of it. Immediately, he was burning with an intense desire to know what this bush-ranging was, and pleaded earnestly with Bruno to tell him, assuring him that he would never whisper a word of it to a living soul.

"Heavens, doctor! What are you asking me?" he cried. "It's a tremendous secret, this thing that you want me to tell you, and enough to ruin me and banish me from the world. Indeed, it would be enough to throw me into the jaws of the Lucifer of San Gallo, if anybody else got wind of it! But so great is the love I bear your honorable doltishness, and the faith I have in you, that I can't find it in me

to deny any of your requests. So I shall tell you my secret, but on one condition. You must swear by the cross of Montesone never to breathe a word of it to a living soul, as you promised."

"On my word, and by the cross of Montesone," swore the doctor.

"Well, doctor honey," began Bruno, "you must know that not so long ago there lived in this town a great wizard, known as Michael Scott, because he came from Scotland, and he was held in great honor and esteem by many noblemen, very few of whom are still alive to-day. He was anxious to leave this city, so at the earnest prayers of his hosts, he left behind him two expert and well-trained pupils of his, with the express command that they should always be ready to carry out the wishes of the gentlemen who had offered him hospitality. Accordingly, the disciples put their art very generously at the disposal of these lords, in matters of love and other little things. But then, developing a certain fondness for the city and the ways of its folks, they decided to make it their permanent home, and grew very friendly with some of the citizens, irrespective of who they were, gentlefolk or not, rich or poor. Only one thing they demanded, and that was, that these people be men of their own tastes, and congenial folk. Well, in order to please these new friends of theirs, they got together a society of about twenty-five members, which met at least twice a month at a place they decided on in advance. Then, once they were gathered there, each man expressed his wish, and quick as a flash, the wizards granted it for the night.

"Now my friend Buffalmacco and I became quite intimate with these two, so that we were admitted to the society and are still members of it. Believe me, whenever we hold our meetings, you ought to see how marvelous it is to see all those gorgeous tapestries hung around the banquet-hall, and the tables set fit for a king, and the hosts of noble, beautiful servants, men and women, all at the beck and call of each guest! And oh, the bowls and beakers, and the flasks, and all the gold and silver goblets, and the dinner-service out of which we eat and drink! And most of all, the huge quantities and varieties of delicacies to please every taste, that are served to us, course after course, all in good time! I could never describe the sounds of sweet music produced by

countless instruments, and the melodious carols that soothe the ear! No, nor could I do justice to the quantities of wax burned up to light those banquets, or the delicacies that are consumed, or the rare, costly wines drunk! Don't fancy we sit there in the suits of clothes you see us in, O worthy simpleton! There's not a man of us, however insignificant, who doesn't look like an emperor, so richly are we dressed and decked with gorgeous ornaments!

"But beyond all these pleasures offered us, there's that of beautiful women. You have only to wish, and they are brought before you from the four corners of the earth. There, you may come face to face with the Lady of the Bearded Niche, and the Queen of the Basques, the wife of the Sultan, the Empress of Osbech, the Blabalot of Nornland, the Halfhiere of Berlinzone, and the Lackwit of Zanyton. But what am I telling you? We have all the queens in the world, even the Redpoll of Prester John, who has his horns planted in the middle of his arse—can you imagine such a thing? Well, after these ladies have quaffed a bowl, eaten a tid-bit or so, and taken a couple of turns around the dance-floor, each one retires to her bedroom, with the man at whose wish she was summoned there. Ah, those bedrooms! Believe me, they look like a glimpse of Paradise, so beautiful are they, and no less fragrant than the spice-jars of your shop, when you have your cummin pounded. There are beds that you'd swear were more magnificent than the Doge's of Venice, and it's in those beds they go to rest. Heavens, what a to-do with the pedals, what a pulling of cleats these fair weavers carry on, to get a close weave! I leave it to your imagination!

"The luckiest of them all, though, in my opinion, are Buffalmacco and myself, for he sends for the Queen of France most of the time, and I for the Queen of England, two of the handsomest women in the world. We know so well how to handle them, that they have no eyes for anybody else. You can see for yourself, whether we have good reason to live more happily than other men, and have a jollier time, considering the fact that we possess the love of two such glorious queens—not to mention the fact that whenever we want a thousand florins or so from them, we're ever accommodated.

"Well then, this is the thing we call bush-ranging

in the vernacular—for just as rangers despoil men of their possessions, so do we, with the simple difference that they never give it back, whereas we always do, after we've made use of it. You understand, then, worshipful doctor, what we mean when we say we go bush-ranging, and you see how important it is to keep the matter secret. I needn't say any more about it, or urge you further to keep it to yourself."

Well, our worthy doctor, whose science went no farther, perhaps, than to cure babies of milk-rash, believed Bruno's words as though they had been gospel truth, and was kindled to as great a pitch of desire to be admitted to the society, as any man might feel for the most desirable thing imaginable.

"It's no great wonder both of you are so happy," he remarked to Bruno in all seriousness. It was with great difficulty he put off for another time his request to be made a member of the band, thinking that after he had shown Bruno further kindnesses, he could more confidently voice his prayers. Therefore, reserving his plea for a more propitious occasion, he developed still more friendly relations with Bruno, inviting him to meals night and day, and showering upon him the most extravagant affection. So close indeed was this friendship, that it looked as if the doctor no longer knew how to live without him, or could, for that matter.

Bruno, on his part, seeing he had fallen on soft ground, had no wish to seem ungrateful in the face of the doctor's favors, and had painted a whole Lent on the walls of his parlor, an Agnus Dei in the foyer of his bedroom, and above the street-door a handsome chamber-pot, so that patients in need of his services might be able to distinguish him from others of his profession. Moreover, in a little gallery of the doctor's house, Bruno had painted the battle of the rats and the cats, over whose beauties his host went into raptures.

Sometimes, the artist would say to the doctor, when he had not been invited to supper, "Last night I went to a meeting, and as I was a little tired of the Queen of England, I had them summon for me the Prettybitch of the Grand Cham of Tartary."

"What's this Prettybitch?" asked the doctor. "I'm not well up in those names."

"I don't wonder at all, doctor honey," replied

Bruno, "for I've heard Porcograsso and Vannacena make no mention of them."

"You mean Ipocrasso and Avicenna," corrected the doctor.

"My word, I suppose so!" replied Bruno. "I know as little of your names as you do of mine. Well, Prettybitch, in the vernacular of the Grand Cham, means the same thing as quean in ours. What a damn fine wench you'd find her, though. She'd make you forget your medicines, I swear, and all your pots and plasters!"

Again, and again, he set fuel to the doctor's fire in this fashion. At last, one night, as the doctor was holding up the light while Bruno was busy on his fresco of the battle between the rats and the cats, he thought he had now won him over with his many kindnesses, and decided to open his heart to him. As they were alone, he said:

"God knows, Bruno, there's no man alive for whom I'd sacrifice everything as I would for you, and even if you were to ask me to walk from here to Peretola, I'd do it, believe me! So I don't want you to be surprised, if I ask you to do something for me in all friendship and confidence.

"As you recall, not so long ago you told me of the good times you have in your jolly society, and I wanted so to become a member, that I don't remember ever yearning as much for anything in all my life. And not without reason, as you will discover, if I should ever be admitted to it. Yes, you may even call me a fool and an idiot, if I don't summon the most wonderful and beautiful servant-girl you've ever laid eyes on! It was at Cacavincigli I met her last year, and I'm just wild about her. Christ's body, I offered her ten round shillings, if she'd give in to me, and the wench wouldn't! So I pray you, with all my heart and soul, tell me what I must do to become a member. And you, do all you can, exert all your influence to get me in. I promise, you'll have a trusty comrade in me, and one of considerable standing, too, I'll have you know! First and foremost, look at me! You see what a good-looking chap I am—and I have a leg! My face is as fresh as a rose, and what's more, I'm a doctor of medicine, which your company has none of, I'm sure. Yes, and I know a lot of jolly stories and ballads, too. Listen, I'll sing you one." Immediately he burst into song.

Bruno was dying to laugh, and nearly exploded into a roar, but still he contained himself. The ballad sung, "What do you think of it?" asked the doctor.

Bruno said, "Marvelous! On my word, cheap reed whistles are nothing to you, so gloriously did you sing off-key!"

"Yes, indeed," said the doctor. "You'd never have believed it, if you hadn't heard it with your own ears."

"Right you are, no doubt about it," agreed Bruno.

The doctor resumed, "I know plenty more, but we won't speak of them now. You see me here before you, the son of a gentleman, even though my father did live in the country. Moreover, I'm sprung of a mother who boasts of Vallecchio blood. Then, as you've been able to see for yourself, I have the finest books and the best clothes of any doctor in Florence. Faith, I've a suit that cost me over four hundred lire, all told, and that was more than ten years ago, mind you! So please, I urge you with all my heart, do your best to get me admitted to your society. If you'll only manage it, I swear you can be as sick as you please, and I'll never charge you a penny for my cures."

Bruno took heed of the doctor's words, and was more than ever convinced he was a blockhead.

"Pardon me, doctor," he said, "hold the light a trifle more this way, and don't be impatient while I put tails on these rats. Then I'll answer you." The tails duly provided, Bruno turned to the doctor, pretending his request weighed heavily upon his mind, and said, "Yes, doctor, I admit there are no lengths to which you wouldn't go for my sake. Still, though what you ask me to do for you may be little enough for a man of your intellect, it's a serious problem so far as I am concerned. There's no man in the world, for whom I'd do it more willingly than yourself, if it lay in my power; first of all because I love you as you deserve, and then for your words, which are so rich in sense that they'd move a stone, not to speak of shaking my resolve. Truly, the longer I know you, the wiser you seem to be. But even if there were no other reason, I could not help loving you, considering you are so crazy about a creature as lovely as you described. I can tell you this, though. I haven't as much to say over matters of initiation as you seem to imagine, and so I could not do for you all that is

required. However, if you swear to me your solemnest and most inviolable oath, that you'll keep it to yourself, I'll tell you the way to go about it. I'm almost sure that in view of the fine books and clothes you mentioned just now, you'll have no trouble in getting what you want."

"Speak, speak in all security," urged the doctor. "Ah, I see you still don't know me intimately, and have no notion of how well I can keep a secret. Why, when Master Gasparuolo da Saliceto was judge at Forlimpopoli, he never did a thing without telling me about it, he had such faith in my secrecy. Do you want proof? Well, I'm the first man he ever told he was going to marry Bergamina. Just fancy that!"

"That's settled, then," replied Bruno, "for if this worthy trusted you, I can do likewise. Well, here's what you have to do. In this society of ours, it is our custom to have a president and two counselors, who are elected every six months. There's no doubt Buffalmacco will be chosen president the beginning of the month, and I shall be counselor—that's already arranged. Now you must know that the president can be very influential in having any man he wishes admitted to the society, so I think you should do your best to make friends with Buffalmacco, and get in his good graces by treating him royally. He's the sort of man who would like you immediately on discovering what a scholar you are. After you've overwhelmed him into friendship with your wit, and the good things you have aplenty, you can broach your request. He couldn't possibly refuse you. As it is, I've already told him about you, and he's very fond of you. So, then, after you've done as I say, let me deal with him."

"That's fine advice," said the doctor, "and I like it. If he's really the kind of man who enjoys the company of scholars, let him exchange a few words with me, and you'll see how I'll make him seek me out after that. Why, as for wisdom, I've enough to furnish a town and still remain a sage!"

After Bruno had come to an agreement with the doctor, he told the whole story to Buffalmacco, who could scarcely control his impatient desire to give this extraordinary numbskull all he was looking for; while Dr. Simon, equally anxious to go bush-ranging, did not have a moment's rest till he succeeded in striking up an acquaintance with him.

Then began a round of tempting dinners, banquets and feasts in honor of Buffalmacco and Bruno, who, sampling the generous wines, fatted capons and goodies worth a fabulous amount, furnished by their host, stuck close at his heels. At last, like the obliging good fellows they were, they ended by becoming the doctor's permanent guests, without much coaxing, though they never failed to assure him they would not have done any other man the honor.

Finally, when Dr. Simon thought the moment ripe, he bearded Buffalmacco on the subject of membership to the society, as he had already done Bruno. The cunning rogue simulated dreadful fury and rated Bruno soundly, saying, "By the Lord of Pasignano, I don't know what's keeping me from bashing you on the head till your nose falls to your heels, you stool-pigeon! You're the only one who could have given the doctor this information."

Dr. Simon took the other's part, staunchly denying Bruno had told him anything, and swearing he had learned of it from other sources, until, by dint of his moving eloquence, overflowing with its usual wisdom, he succeeded in pacifying Buffalmacco.

"One can well see you've studied at Bologna, my dear doctor," he said, "and that you've brought back a sealed mouth to this town. It's also obvious that you did not learn your ABC on the apple, like most numbskulls, but on the gherkin, which is so long. And again, if I'm not mistaken, you must have been baptized on a Sunday. Bruno, here, told me you went to Bologna to study medicine, but it seems to me you studied to persuade men, a thing you can do better than anybody else I know, with your great wisdom and eloquence."

The doctor let him go no further, and said, turning to Bruno, "See what it means to have to do with wise men! Who could have grasped every particular of my mental make-up as readily as this estimable gentleman? Why, you weren't half so quick to appreciate my good points as he was! But confess, don't you think I lived up to what I said, when you told me Buffalmacco liked to rub elbows with scholars?"

"You certainly did, and more!" assented Bruno.

Dr. Simon then addressed Buffalmacco. "You'd have had plenty to talk about, if you had seen me in Bologna. There wasn't a soul in that town, great or

small, master or pupil, who didn't go wild over me, so much did I delight them with my talk and cleverness. I never said a word, I tell you, that I didn't have every man of them rocking with laughter—that's how much they liked to hear me speak. Yes, when I left they mourned and cried and begged me to remain, and they went to such limits that, if I had only stayed, they would have had me alone deliver the lectures on medicine to the body of students. I didn't want to, though, as I was anxious to take possession of some very valuable property that's always been in the family, and so I came back."

"What do you say now?" Bruno asked his friend. "You wouldn't believe me when I told you! I swear, there's not a doctor in these regions who can hold a candle to him, when it comes to understanding ass' piss, and I'll bet you could not come across another like him if you were to go from here to the gates of Paris. Now try to keep from doing what he asks you!"

"Bruno's right," said Dr. Simon. "But I'm not appreciated here. You're all rather stupid people here on the whole. But you ought to see me among my kind, the scholars, where I belong!"

Said Buffalmacco, "Indeed, doctor, I must admit you know our folks better than I should have thought. But speaking as one ought, to men of learning like yourself, I tell you right now, that I will most assuredly manage to have you elected a member of our society."

After this promise, the doctor's liberality towards the two rogues knew no bounds. They, on their part, lived like princes while they could, and led him a merry dance, palming off the most arrant nonsense on him, to the extent of saying they would procure for his mistress the Countess of the Latrine, the most beautiful thing to be found in all the outskirts of the human generation.

"And pray, who is this countess?" asked our precious pumpkinhead.

"Ah, my friend," Buffalmacco informed him, "she is a mighty great lady, and there are very few homes the world over where she hasn't some control, not to mention the friars Minor, among other folks, who kow-tow to her, to the clatter of castanets. I must say, whenever she goes out, she lets the world know about it, even though a good part of the time she's very much shut up. Only the other night,

nevertheless, she passed by your door, as she was going to the Arno to wash her feet and take a breath of air, but most often she remains in the country of the Latrine. You can see many of her sergeants about very often, all of them carrying the staff and the sphere, as a sign of her authority. As for her knights, they're everywhere to be found—for instance, His worshipful Highness of the Door, Master Shyte, Lord Broomhandle, Spattersplash and many others besides, who must all be friends of yours, though you can't recall them just now. Forget the wench of Cacavincigli, for it's to the arms of this great lady we'll bring you, unless we're mistaken."

The doctor, a Bolognese by birth and training, did not understand their slang, and was therefore mighty well pleased at the prospect of such a mistress. Not long after this conversation, the two rogues came and brought him the welcome news that he had been accepted as a member of their confraternity, whereupon the doctor invited them to dinner the day preceding the night of the society's meeting.

"What am I to do to get there?" he asked, when the dinner was over.

"You see, doctor," began Buffalmacco, "to begin with, you must have steady nerves, for unless you have, you might meet with some obstacle, and at the same time bring us to serious harm. Now I'll tell you why you need courage. To-night, at about the time when you would ordinarily be falling asleep, you must make it your business to be on one of those raised tombs that were erected some time ago beyond the walls of Santa Maria Novella. Be sure to wear one of your most gorgeous suits, so that you'll create a fine impression on your introduction to the society, and also because, from what we were able to gather from report, the countess intends to knight you with the Order of the Bath at her own expense, seeing you are a gentleman of good family.

"Well, when you get to the tombs, wait until the guide comes, whom we'll send for you. I want to prepare you beforehand for all this, so pay attention. This thing that will come for you, is a black beast, not too large, with horns on its pate. Now, the moment it appears, it will try to scare you by prancing and leaping about, and raising the devil with its bellowing and roaring. But when it sees you're not afraid, it will come near you as gently as a lamb.

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Then you are to jump down fearlessly from the monument, without calling on God or the saints, and mount upon its back. Don't touch it any more after that, but just fold your hands across your breast as a sign of submission, and it will gently go its way and carry you to our meeting-place.

"But I must warn you, if you call on God or the saints, or show the least sign of fear, it may throw you off its back and pitch you into some hole, where you'd surely stink for it. So I repeat, if you think you haven't the courage to go through with it, for goodness' sake don't come, for you'll only bring yourself to harm and do us no worldly good."

"You evidently don't know me yet," answered the doctor. "Perhaps you imagine I'm a ninny, because of my gloves and my long gown. If you knew the mischief I used to be up to in Bologna, when I went whoring with my chums, you'd be surprised! My word, I remember a certain night when a girl refused to come along with us—a sorry little slut she was, no higher than my knee! Ha-ha! First I gave her a sound drubbing, and then, lifting her off her feet, I think without exaggeration, I must have carried her at least a good bow-shot, until finally, by hook or crook, she had to give in and come along. And that other night, when I was all alone with my servant, and walked past the burial ground of the friars Minor! Think of it, a woman had been buried that very day, and I wasn't even frightened! So don't you give yourselves any concern about me. I'm a brave fellow, I am, and mighty strong, too. As for my clothes, I want you to know I'll have you proud of me! I'm going to wear the scarlet gown in which I got my degree, and we'll see how glad your society will be to have me. I'll bet they'll make me president then and there! Imagine the stir I'll make when I'm present in person, if, even before clapping eyes on me, this countess is so mad about me that she's willing to knight me with the Order of the Bath! What, as if I can't wear the honor as well as any, or fail to carry it off with as good a grace. Just leave it to me!"

"That's splendid," said Buffalmacco, "but don't play us a trick by not appearing at the appointed place when we send for you. I'm merely mentioning this, because it's pretty cold these nights, and you doctors are awfully finicky about such things."

"The Lord be thanked, I'm none of your frozen turnips," said Dr. Simon. "I never worry about the cold. Indeed, whenever I have to get up at night to obey a call of nature, as a man sometimes has to, I hardly ever put anything over my nightshirt but my fur-coat—so I'll be on the spot, without fail."

The two friends went away. Accordingly, as the coming darkness heralded the night, the doctor gave some plausible excuses to his wife, and cautiously drew his best gown out of the closet. Then, when he thought the moment had come, he slipped it on and sallied forth to Santa Maria Novella. Climbing upon a raised tomb, he drew his clothes about him because of the bitter cold, and hugging himself tight, resigned himself to await the coming of the beast.

In the meantime, Buffalmacco, who was a great, strapping hulk of a man, arranged to get hold of one of those masks much used in certain games now out of fashion, and putting on a black fur coat, with the hairy side outward, dressed himself to look very much like a bear, except that the mask was made to resemble a devil's face, with great big horns. So disguised, he went to the square of Santa Maria Novella, Bruno walking a little behind, to see how the joke would turn out. No sooner did Buffalmacco catch sight of the doctor huddled upon the tomb, than he set up a gay dance of his own, jumping and leaping and tumbling and capering about the square, accompanying the frolic with such fearful roaring, shrieking, whistling and howling, that one might have thought him a thing possessed.

The doctor's hair stood on end when he caught sight of the beast and heard its unearthly clamor, and being more timid than a woman, he quaked and shivered and wished himself safe at home, rather than where he was. Since he had gone so far, he plucked up his spirits and resolved to see it through, pricked as he was by his impatience to witness the wonders the two friends had described.

Buffalmacco, after playing the devil a while, made a feint of calming down, and approaching the tomb where the doctor was crouching, stood still and waited. Dr. Simon, trembling with dread, was in a quandary, not knowing whether to mount the beast or to stay where he was. At last, fearing the creature might hurt him if he refused, he chose the lesser of the two evils, and coming down the grave-

stone, clambered on the beast's back, ejaculating a whispered, "God help me!" Although he did not cease shivering for a moment, he still made himself as comfortable as he could on the back of his mount, and folded his hands across his breast in an attitude of submission, as he had been told. Then Buffalmacco took the road toward Santa Maria della Scala, going slowly on all fours, until he approached the cloister of the nuns of Ripole.

Now at that time, there were a number of ditches in that district, into which the farmers of the surrounding fields used to drop the Countess of the Latrine, in order to fertilize the soil. Up walked Buffalmacco to the edge of one, and seizing the opportunity, took the doctor by the leg, pulled him suddenly off his back, and threw him headfirst into the hole, accompanying the gesture with grunts and howls, prancings and stampings and playing the very devil. Finally, he retraced his steps along Santa Maria della Scala, toward the field of Ognisanti, where he rejoined Bruno, who had disappeared from the scene, finding it impossible to contain his peals of laughter. Together, they rejoiced over the success of the joke, and then posted themselves at a distance from the ditch, to see what the bemuddled doctor would do.

Now when our Dr. Simon found himself in that loathsome place, he struggled to get to his feet and climb out, but with every step he lost his foothold and slipped, until he was a foul, filthy mess from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, even swallowing a taste of the abomination. Nevertheless, he finally managed to scramble out at the expense of his doctor's cap, which he had to leave behind, and cleared himself of as much ordure as he could scrape off with his hands. Then, not knowing what else to do, he returned home and clattered at the gate until someone let him in.

Scarcely had the door closed upon the poor, foul, stinking devil, when the two rascals popped up to witness the reception he got from his wife, whom they could hear from outside, giving him a lecture in round terms. "Good, good!" she was saying. "It serves you right! You had gone whoring, eh? And you had put on your fine scarlet gown to show the wench how handsome and wonderful you are! What, am I not enough for you? Believe me, I'd be plenty for a whole nation, let alone your paltry

self! Would to heaven they had twisted your throat while they were at it, instead of simply throwing you where you deserved to be thrown! Here's a fine specimen! Here's a respectable doctor for you, who has a wife of his own, and goes prowling about at night hunting other men's!"

With such words, and others in the same key, she stood by while the doctor was being washed, and did not cease tormenting him until well-nigh midnight.

The following morning, the two rogues presented themselves at the doctor's house, taking care beforehand to bedaub themselves, under their clothes, with black and blue streaks resembling the contusions left by a beating. They found the doctor already risen, and were admitted. As they walked toward his room, their nostrils were everywhere assailed by a lingering stench, for it had been impossible to remove it from his clothes, in spite of many washings. Upon hearing the sound of their steps, Dr. Simon got up to meet them and wished them good morning, but the two rascals, who had arranged beforehand how they were to proceed, replied, feigning great anger:

"We wish you no such thing! On the contrary, would to God He would send you afflictions enough to make you die like a beast, traitorous wretch that you are! It's no fault of yours we weren't killed like two dogs, after we went through all that trouble to pleasure you and show you honor! Last night we were so belabored with blows, that half of them would take an ass to Rome! And all because you played us false! Do you think that's all? We even run the danger of being expelled from the society, to which we had arranged to admit you. If you don't believe us, look at our bodies and see what they're like!"

In the dim light of the room, they opened their smocks and gave him a glimpse of their chests all adorned with painted bruises, then quickly covered them up again. Dr. Simon would have apologized, and recounted his own tale of woe with complete details of how he had been thrown from the beast, and into what foul a place, but Buffalmacco interrupted him.

"I wish it had thrown you plumb off the bridge into the river," he cried. "Why the devil did you have to call on God and the saints? Didn't we give you sufficient warning in advance?"

"I didn't, I swear," said the doctor.

"What do you mean you didn't!" cried Buffalmacco. "You certainly did. Over and over, too! Our guide told us you trembled like a reed, and didn't know what you were about. You've played us a mean trick, all right, but nobody will ever catch us again! We'll get you yet for it, though, mark my words!"

"For God's sake, forgive me," pleaded the doctor. "Don't shame me before my neighbors," and with all the eloquence at his command he strove to win them over.

His fear of their telling the story abroad and shaming him publicly, had a salutary effect for Bruno and Buffalmacco, for if in the past the doctor had overwhelmed them with his generosity, from that time on he waxed even more generous, showering them with honors, dinners, banquets and other good things.

So it was that wisdom was taught to the scholar who had learned so little of it at Bologna.



A SICILIAN woman cunningly cheats a merchant out of the profits he made in Palermo; but the man, pretending to have returned with more valuable merchandise than before, borrows money from her and leaves her nothing but water and oakum in exchange.

YOU need not ask how heartily the queen's story had made them all laugh by its various details. It is enough to say that every woman there had laughed to the point of tears, at least a dozen times. However, when it drew to a close, Dioneo, knowing his turn had come, plunged into his own.

Gracious ladies, he began, it is a well-known fact that the more cunning the person befooled, the more gratifying we find the tricks that do it. Although all of you have told very good stories, I am going to tell you one on the same theme, that you should appreciate more than the others, for the simple reason that the trickster who was fooled in the end, was a subtler mistress of the art than any of the men or women you've told about.

Well, there was once a custom, which I believe may survive to this day, in all countries having ports

on the open sea, that whenever merchants arrived with a ship-load of merchandise, they unloaded the cargo and had it transported to a storehouse commonly known as the customs-house, which was generally maintained by the town or the prince of the country. There, the merchants presented an invoice of their cargo to the proper functionaries, together with a declaration of its value, and upon being assigned a warehouse, stored their goods under lock and key. Then the customs officers noted in their records the value of the goods to the merchant's credit, and as the merchandise was disposed of, entirely or in part, they deducted their commission from the profits. It is this customs record or directory from which brokers derive their information, concerning the quality and quantity of the goods and standing of the merchants to whom it belongs. Then, depending on what they need, they enter into business relations with the merchants, and carry on their exchanges, barter, sales and other affairs.

Now this custom was in force, as everywhere else, in Palermo, Sicily, where there were likewise to be found, as you may find to this day, many women beautiful of body, but at loggerheads with virtue,—though anyone not acquainted with them might mistake them for well-born, modest ladies. As soon as a foreign merchant comes to town, these women, given over heart and soul, as they are, not simply to shave men, but to skin them alive, consult the customs directory to see what goods he has, and how much he is worth, and then with their pleasant ways, soft speech and artful, amorous wiles, do their utmost to catch him in their net, under pretense of love. Many a man has been caught in this fashion, from whom they have filched a large share of his merchandise. And many a one has been robbed of everything, yes, to the extent of making the poor devil leave both goods and ship, and sometimes his skin and bones behind, so cunningly did the lady-barber know how to wield her razor.

Well, not so long ago, one of our young Florentine merchants arrived in Palermo, commissioned by his employers to dispose of a quantity of woolen cloth, which had been left over from a fair at Salerno, and was perhaps worth five-hundred florins in gold. Declaring its value to the customs officers, he stored it in a warehouse, and caring little about get-

ting rid of it in a hurry, he wandered about the city, to see the sights and have a good time.

Now Salabaetto, for so he was called, though his name was Nicolo da Cignano, was a fair, golden-haired, attractive youth with a body straight and lithe as an arrow, and as he went about, it chanced that Iancofiore, one of these lady-barbers, having learned of his circumstances, fell to ogling him. He became aware of her attentions, and thinking she must be a great lady, attracted to him by his physical charms, decided to carry on the love-affair with discretion, and therefore, without making anyone privy to his intentions, he began walking up and down in front of her house. Iancofiore was not slow to notice it, and for a few days kept him in a flame of passion by the glances of her eyes, pretending she was pining away for love of him. Then secretly she sent a maid-servant of hers, an accomplished mistress in the procurer's art, to speak to him. The woman first talked of things in general, but then, almost with tears in her eyes, she informed him that his good looks and graciousness had so bewitched her mistress, that the poor lady could find no peace, either day or night.

"So, at your convenience," she added, "she would like more than anything in the world to meet you secretly at a bath." And taking a ring out of her purse, she made him a gift of it, on behalf of her mistress.

Salabaetto was the happiest man alive at the news, and taking the ring, held it to his eyes. Then, kissing it, he slipped it on his finger and said to the good woman, "If Iancofiore loves me, tell her her love is requited a thousandfold, for I love her more than life itself," adding that he would go anywhere she wished, any time she commanded.

The go-between, returning to her mistress, reported Salabaetto's answer, whereupon the youth was soon informed at what bath he was to await her the following day, after vespers.

Accordingly, Salabaetto was punctual to keep the rendez-vous at the appointed hour, and without saying a word about it to anyone, found the bath Iancofiore had engaged. He had scarcely been waiting a minute or so when two slave-girls appeared, loaded down with all kinds of things, one carrying on her head a fine mattress stuffed with cotton wool, and her companion a basket of provisions.

Laying the mattress on a bed in a private room of the bath, they spread over it a pair of dainty sheets, decorated with silk embroidery, and over them, a coverlet of Cyprian buckram, white as driven snow, with two pillows wrought in open lace that was a wonder to see. That done, they doffed their clothes, and climbing into the bath, scoured it until it gleamed.

Iancofiore herself was not long in coming, and arrived escorted by two other slave-girls. At the first opportunity, she greeted him effusively, and heaving the deepest sighs, said, after a shower of kisses and embraces, "I don't know who but you could ever have brought me to this! You've kept me in a furnace of love, O my precious Tuscan darling!"

Then, when she was ready, they entered the bath together stark-naked, and with them, two of the slave-girls. But she wouldn't hear of their laying a hand on him. Oh, no! She herself washed him all over with soap, scented with musk and cloves, and later rinsed him in a way that was wonderful to see. Then she had her own body soaped and massaged by the slave-girls. When the bath was over, the attendants brought two snow-white sheets, so redolent of roses that the surrounding air seemed a cloud of attar, in one of which they wrapped Salabaetto, and in the other, the lady, and then, lifting them up bodily, carried them to the bed made ready for them.

For a while, they were left there to perspire, when the slave-girls relieved them of their wet sheets, and they remained naked on the others. At this stage, the attendants produced graceful silver perfume-bottles, some full of rose-water, and some of orange-blossom lotion, jessamine and extract of citron blooms, with which they sprinkled the bathers' bodies. Later came boxes of sweets and flasks of precious wines, and for some time the lovers partook of the refreshments.

Salabaetto believed himself in heaven, and cast a thousand languishing glances at Iancofiore, who was indeed a beautiful woman. The time seemed never to pass before the slave-girls would leave them alone and he would find himself in her embrace. At last the attendants took their leave at Iancofiore's request, after lighting a torch in the chamber, and the lovers fell to embracing each other, dallying for a long time, to the youth's delight, who believed she was consumed with love of him.

At length, Iancofiore thought it time to go home,

and summoning the attendants, the two lovers dressed and regained their dissipated forces with another sip of wine and a taste of the sweets. Then, washing their hands and faces in the scented toilet-waters, they were ready to go, when Iancofiore said, "If you've no objection, Salabaetto, I'd consider it a great privilege for you to sup with me this evening, at my home, and spend the night with me."

Salabaetto had already been entirely seduced by her beauty and artful wiles, and was certain she loved him as her immortal soul. Therefore he replied, "Iancofiore, every wish of yours is most agreeable to me, hence to-night and all other nights, I will do whatever is your wish and pleasure."

Iancofiore returned home, had her bedroom adorned with all her dresses and knick-knacks, and ordering a delicious supper, waited for Salabaetto to come. The night had hardly fallen when he set out for his mistress' house, where he was welcomed with joy and cheer and royally entertained.

After supper, Iancofiore and he retired to the bedroom, full of a heady fragrance of burning lign-aloes. The bed was richly embroidered with Cyprian singing-birds; costly gowns hung from the racks. "Truly," thought Salabaetto, "she must be a grand lady, and a rich one, too." It is true he had heard gossip to the contrary about her way of living, but he would not believe it for anything in the world. Indeed, if he had a slight suspicion that she might have taken advantage of other men, he was certain that that sort of thing could never happen to him.

All night long he lay with her in a heaven of bliss, adding fuel to the flame of his passion. In the morning Iancofiore, girding about him a handsome silver belt with a purse, said, "Dearest love, I commend myself to your pleasure, and as my body is at your command, so is everything I possess. Speak, and I will do for you all that is in my power."

Salabaetto took her in his arms and kissed her happily; then leaving her house, he went to the meeting-place of merchants like himself.

Time passed, and the youth was a frequent visitor at Iancofiore's house. His amusement cost him nothing, but he became more and more embroiled with her. Now during this state of affairs, he struck a bargain over his cargo of stuffs, and cleared a goodly profit, which soon came to Iancofiore's knowl-

edge, though not through Salabaetto. One night, therefore, when he went to see her, she began to chat and play with him, giving him a thousand kisses and embracing him, indeed, feigning such ardent passion that she looked ready to expire in his arms for very love. She would even have given him two beautiful silver plates, but Salabaetto would not accept them, scrupling at the thought that with one gift and another, he had already accepted some thirty florins' worth of bounties from her, and still he had not succeeded in making her take as much as a penny's worth from him. Finally, when she had roused him to the highest pitch of desire by her passionate and wanton behavior, one of her slave-girls came in as she had arranged, and called her.

Iancofiore left the room, and a little later returned all in tears. Then, flinging herself face downward on the bed, she wept in despair and wailed as no woman had ever done before. Salabaetto did not know what to make of it, and gathering her in his arms, said, as he wept in sympathy, "Tell me, beloved, what has come over you so suddenly? What makes you despair so? Come, tell me, darling!"

She allowed herself to be coaxed and begged for a sufficiently long time, and then replied, "Alas, my love, I don't know what to do or say! I've just received some letters from my brother in Messina, bidding me sell or pawn everything I have here, as I must send him a thousand florins within a week without fail, otherwise he'll forfeit his head. I'm at my wits' end. How can I raise that amount at such short notice? If I had only two weeks' time, I'd find a way of obtaining it, from certain sources from which even more money is owing me. I could even sell a bit of our property. But I can't! I can't! O God, would I had died before such dreadful news ever reached me!"

Her despair knew no bounds, and not for a moment did she cease lamenting. Now Salabaetto, whom the flames of love had robbed of his usual common sense, believed that her tears were genuine and her words even more so.

"Dearest one," he said, "I cannot accommodate you with a thousand florins, but I can let you have five-hundred, if you think you can return the money to me in two weeks. It's very fortunate for you that I was able to dispose of my stuffs yesterday, for if I

hadn't, I couldn't have let you have even a penny."

"Oh, poor darling!" cried Iancofiore. "Do you mean to say you've ever been in financial straits? Why didn't you ask me for money? Though I may not have a thousand florins at my disposal, I could always have spared you one-hundred, even two-hundred, if necessary. Really, you've made me feel uncomfortable about accepting the kindness you offered."

Salabaetto was more than ever deceived by her words and answered, "Please don't let that prevent you! Believe me, if I had ever needed money as you do at present, I wouldn't have hesitated a moment about asking you for it."

"Ah, my own, dear Salabaetto!" sighed Iancofiore. "Now I know how true and wholehearted is the love you bear me! To think that without even waiting to be asked, you're so ready to help me out of my difficulty, and with such a large sum of money! Darling, you know that even without this, I belonged to you, body and soul. But now I shall be all the more yours, and I shall never fail to remember that I owe my brother's life to you! God knows I'm unwilling enough to accept the money from you, knowing you are a merchant, and that merchants carry on all their business by means of it. But since necessity obliges me, I'll take it. Besides, I'm certain I'll be able to give it back to you soon. As for the balance, well, if I can't find a way of scraping it together, I'll pawn all my belongings."

With that touching speech, and tears still streaming from her eyes, she let herself sink upon the youth's breast. He was ready with words of comfort, and spent the night with her. The following morning, the better to prove his generous devotion, he brought her the five-hundred florins, without waiting for her to remind him. She took it with tears in her eyes, but with a heart leaping for joy in her breast, Salabaetto taking no surety but her simple promise.

Once Iancofiore had the money in her clutches, she played her lover quite a different tune. Whereas formerly, he had been free to come and go as he pleased, now all sorts of excuses began to crop up, so that he was lucky if he could see her once out of seven times. Nor was he showered with kisses and caresses and beaming looks, as in former days. The two weeks during which he should have received

his money had come and gone. A month had passed, and another, and whenever he asked for it, he received only vague words in payment. At last, the scales fell from his eyes; he saw clearly through the crafty woman's wiles, and appreciated his own folly.

Realizing that he could make no demands upon her, since he had neither a written statement nor any other testimony to prove he had given her the money, and ashamed to confide in anyone, because he had been warned against her in advance, and was therefore afraid of the ridicule he might naturally expect for his foolhardiness, he swallowed his misery, and in silence bewailed his stupidity.

His employers meanwhile had been plying him with letters, asking him to change the money and send it to them. Finally, fearing that if he did not, his error might be discovered and made public, he resolved to go away, and taking ship he went—not to Pisa, his rightful destination, but to Naples.

Now at that time, our friend Pietro dello Canigiano happened to be holding office in that city, as treasurer to the Empress of Constantinople. He was a learned man, of great wit and subtle understanding, and as it was, closely related to Salabaetto and his family. As Master Pietro was the sort of man who could keep a secret, Salabaetto, some days after his arrival, confided all his troubles to him and asked his help and advice about obtaining something to enable him to earn his livelihood, as he never intended to show his face in Florence.

"That was an evil thing you did," said Canigiano, distressed at what he heard. "You have behaved unworthily. It was a shabby kind of obedience you showed your masters, throwing away such a sum of money at once, and all for lechery! But what's done can't be undone, and we must cast about for some solution."

However, like the quick-witted man he was, he soon thought of a course to follow and told Salabaetto about it, who was delighted with the plan, and immediately prepared to carry it out. He still had a little money, and with the help of an equal sum, loaned him by his friend, he purchased a number of bales of cargo, which he had securely rolled and bound with cords. Then, buying twenty oil-casks and filling them, he loaded his merchandise on a ship and returned to Palermo. At the dock, he

declared the value of his goods and casks to the customs officials, had the whole credited to him in the records, and depositing them in the warehouses, informed the men he was not going to dispose of them until the arrival of a new shipment of cargo which he expected.

Iancofiore was soon apprised of the event. Upon learning that the merchandise her former lover had brought on this occasion, was worth a thousand florins or more, without taking the shipment he expected into account, which was easily computed at three-thousand more, she thought she had fleeced him of entirely too little. Accordingly, planning to bait him by returning the five-hundred florins in order to obtain a goodly part of the five-thousand, she sent for Salabaetto.

The youth's wits by this time had been sharpened, and he went to her. Marvelous was the effusiveness of her welcome as, pretending to be wholly ignorant of the cargo he had brought, she said, "Are you angry with me, dear, because I didn't pay back your loan when I should have?"

Salabaetto burst out laughing and said, "Well, to be frank, I was a little hurt, considering that I would tear out my heart for your sake, if I thought it would give you any pleasure. But I'll show you how angry I am. I'm so much in love with you, that I've disposed of most of my property, and bought up merchandise that is worth over two-thousand florins. It's here with me now, and I'm waiting for another shipload from the West, to the value of three-thousand florins more. Well, I've decided to set up a warehouse of my own in this town, and live here the rest of my life, just to be near you, for truly, I obtain more happiness from your love, than any man ever enjoyed with his mistress."

"Salabaetto," answered Iancofiore, "you see how happy I am at everything you do, for you're my darling, whom I love more than my life. Oh, what a joy it is to think you have come back with the intention of settling down in this city! Think of the good times we're going to have together—at least, I hope so. But I have some apologies to make, dear. You remember, when you were about to leave the city, you were sometimes anxious to come here, but you couldn't see me, and when you did, you weren't given the happy reception you were used to. More-

over, I didn't return your loan when I promised. You must realize, dear, that at that time I was in the depths of despair and affliction, and when one is in that state, she can't be expected to look cheerful and make a fuss over anybody, no matter how much she loves him, or how much he expects attention. Then, you must know it is no simple matter for a woman to get together a thousand florins. We get nothing but lies the live-long day, broken promises, and disappointments, and as a result we must lie to others. That's the reason, and the only reason, I didn't give you back your money. I did manage to get it, though, a little after you sailed away, and if I had known where to reach you, I'd have sent it to you, on my word. But I didn't know, you see, so I kept it for you."

Thereupon, she sent for a purse containing the very money he had brought her, and handing it to him she said, "Count it over, and see if it's five-hundred florins."

Salabaetto was never so overjoyed in his life; counting the money, he found it to be the correct amount, and said, as he put it into the purse once more, "Iancofiore, I am convinced of your love, for you have given me sufficient demonstration of it. Both for that, and for the affection I bear you, there's no sum at my disposal which you could ask of me, that I wouldn't be glad to let you have for your needs. Wait until I am settled, and you can put me to the test."

Thus, with many words, their love was patched up. Once more, Salabaetto resumed his intimate relations with her, while she pampered and spoiled him with the greatest kindnesses, and pretended to be dying with love. However, he was resolved to pay back her deceit with deception, and one day, when he had been invited to sup and spend the night with her, he arrived so melancholy and woe-begone, that he looked as though he were about to give up the ghost. Iancofiore put her arms around his neck and kissed him, and then plied him with questions as to the cause of his sorrow. For a long time, he allowed himself be entreated, and then answered, "Iancofiore, this is the end of me! I'm ruined! The ship that was to bring me the merchandise I've been expecting, has been seized by pirates from Monaco, and they're holding it at a ransom of ten thousand florins in gold. I'm to pay a thousand as my

share, and I haven't a penny, as I immediately sent your five-hundred to Naples for a consignment of stuff to be sent me here. If I should be so foolish as to sell the merchandise I have here in storage, I'd hardly realize half of what it's worth, for this is the off-season. What's still worse, nobody here knows me well enough to want to help me, and I'm at my wits' end, because unless I send the money right away, the goods will be shipped off to Monaco, and I'll never be able to claim any of them again."

Iancofiore was deeply concerned by her fear of losing all she had been bargaining for. Therefore, thinking quickly of what she should do to keep him from going to Monaco, she said, "God knows it is a dreadful blow to me, for your sake. But what's the sense of making oneself miserable? If I had the sum at my disposal, God is my witness I'd let you have it without more ado. But I haven't. Of course there's a certain moneylender, who let me have five-hundred florins the other day when I needed it, but he charges an enormous rate of interest—thirty per cent at least, and if you should want to borrow from him, you have to provide him with a good guarantee. I, for one, am perfectly willing to pawn everything I own—myself, if need be, for whatever he's disposed to let me have. But what security will you give him for the rest?"

Salabaetto knew too well what motives prompted her to do him this service, as he also suspected that she herself was the moneylender in question. He had no objections to make, however, and thanking her, said, "My need is too great for me to be daunted by such exorbitant interest. As for security, I'll pledge my goods lying in dock, in favor of the person who lends me the money. But I must keep the key of the warehouse, for you see, I may have to show the things to prospective buyers. Besides, I want to be sure nobody molests the stuff, or tampers with it, putting in one thing for another."

"You're quite right," said Iancofiore, adding that the security was all one could wish it to be.

Early the following morning, she sent for a broker strictly in her confidence, and telling him how the matter stood, gave him a thousand florins. This he gave to Salabaetto, and in return, the merchant signed over to him all the goods that were lying in the warehouse. The documents were duly signed and sealed

to their mutual satisfaction, and parting friends, each went his way to look after his own affairs.

Salabatto did not wait for the grass to grow under his feet, but boarding a galley with his fifteen-hundred florins, he returned to Pietro dello Canigiano in Naples, and thence sent to his employers in Florence a full and scrupulous remittance for the stuff they had commissioned him to sell. Furthermore, he reimbursed Pietro and everyone else from whom he had accepted any loans, and for many days had a good time with his friend over the trick he had played the fair Sicilian. Thence he went to Florence, cured of all desire to be a merchant.

Meanwhile Iancofiore, seeing no trace of Salabatto at Palermo, began to wonder at his strange disappearance and to feel suspicious. For more than two months she waited for him, but then, seeing that he did not come, she had the broker force open the warehouse. First of all they tested the casks that were believed to contain olive-oil, but alas, found they were filled with sea water, with perhaps a gallon or so of oil floating on the surface, near the bung-hole. Then, unpacking the bales, they discovered that all of them but two, which held cloth, were stuffed with common oakum. In short, all the merchandise put together, was not worth more than two-hundred florins.

Long and bitterly did the outwitted woman bewail the five-hundred florins she had returned, and still more bitterly, the thousand she had lent Salabatto, often saying to herself,

"Who with a Tuscan would sell or buy,
Sharp must be of wit and eye."

And so she was left to swallow her loss, and the scorn of defeat, realizing too late that some people can be as clever as others.

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As soon as Dioneo had finished his story, Lauretta knew the period of her reign was over, and commending Pietro Canigiano for his advice which had borne good fruits, and Salabatto's wisdom, no less praiseworthy for carrying it out, she took her laurel-crown from her head and laid it on Emilia's, saying, with feminine charm, "I don't know whether you'll make a good queen, but at least we're certain to have a lovely one in you. Strive,

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then, to make your deeds conform with your beauty."

With that, she resumed her seat, as Emilia full of embarrassment, not so much at the honor bestowed upon her, as at being complimented for the gift which most women desire, blushed until her cheeks looked like roses filled with the flush of dawn. Then, keeping her eyes lowered until the blush was faded from her face, she made arrangements with the steward for everything necessary to their entertainment, and then addressed her company.

"My friends, we've often observed that, after the oxen have toiled under the yoke a good part of the day, they are released of their burden and allowed to roam through the pastures at their sweet will. Again, we have seen that gardens adorned with a variety of leafy blooms are no less beautiful, but indeed, more so, than woods flourishing with nothing but oak trees. I believe, then, considering how many days we have told our stories in accordance with a set theme, that we, no less than others toiling under restraint, will find it not only beneficial, but necessary to romp at will, the better to regain our strength for the yoke once more. Accordingly, I have no intention of setting restrictions on the sort of theme you choose in your usual pleasant story-telling. No, I'd like each and every one of you to regale us with whatever he likes, firmly believing, as I do, that the variety thus afforded will be no less charming than the result we would get by following a specified subject. After this, whoever succeeds to the kingship, will feel stronger for the task, and will therefore be able to keep us within the bounds of our usual laws with greater assurance."

With that she gave them leave to follow their inclinations until supper-time.

They all praised the queen for the wisdom of her suggestion, and then, rising to their feet, gave themselves over to various pastimes, the ladies to twining chaplets and romping about, and the youths to games and dancing. Thus, they whiled away the time before supper, when they gathered about the pleasant fountain and partook of their meal with cheer and goodwill. Afterwards, they enjoyed themselves singing and dancing, as they always did. At last the queen, following the precedent set by the rulers before her, requested Pamfilo to sing a song, in spite of the many which various members of the group had

already sung of their own accord. But he began without waiting to be urged:

“So great, O Love, the good,
The sweetness and delight you make me feel,
That I am glad to burn in your ordeal.

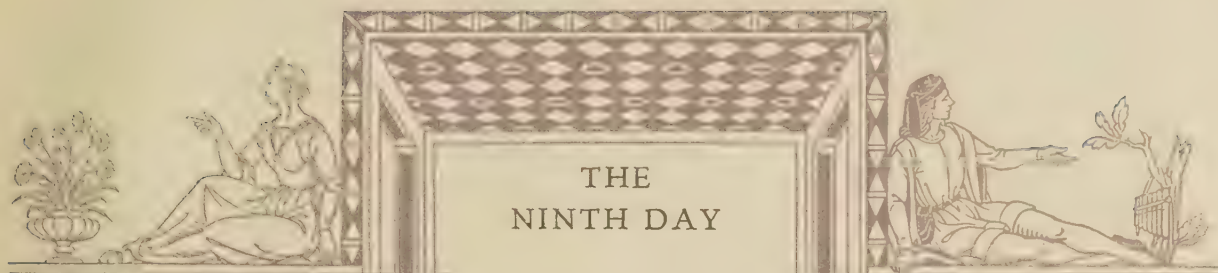
The bounteous pleasures that fill up my heart
For the great joy and dear
To which you led me late,
All overflowing from their vessel start
And on my visage clear
Reveal my happy state;
For of a high estate
My true love is, and of much worth and real.
Therefore I lightly bear the smart I feel.

Neither with music nor with colors fair,
O Love, can I express
The joyousness I know.
Yet if I could, I'd not my feelings bare;
For were I to confess,
My joy would turn to woe.
With such content I glow,
That did I vent a little of my weal,
All words were halt that sought it to reveal.

Beyond all dreams it was that ever I
Should in my arms enfold
That most desired place,
Or to the sweetest of all spots so nigh
My burning visage hold,
For my soul's health and grace.
So fortunate a case
Is mine, none would believe. Therefore I
burn and reel,
And what rejoices me from all conceal.”

And so Pamfilo's song came to an end. In the course of it, all, without exception, had taken up the refrain, nor had they failed to note the words with more careful attention than was usually accorded the singer, striving to guess what he had to conceal from them. Nevertheless, though there were as many different conjectures as there were people conjecturing, not one of them was able to arrive at the truth.

But when the queen heard the song come to its close, and perceived that both the young men and women were anxious to rest, she dismissed them and sent them to bed.



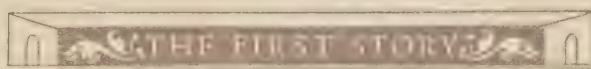
LIGHT, from whose splendor the shadows flee, had already transmuted the deep azure of the eighth heaven to a rich blue, and the flowerets had begun to lift their heads in the meadows, when Emilia arose and had her fair companions summoned, as well as the youths. They came at her summons, and regulating their steps by the queen's easy pace, followed her to a greenwood not far from the palace. They went through the leafy alleys, and there found many animals, goats and deer, waiting for them like tame or friendly beasts, as though they were conscious of the existing plague and no longer had terror of the hunter.

The youths and maidens played with them awhile, chasing this one and that about, as though they wanted to catch them, and deriving the keenest delight from seeing them leap and scamper. But when the sun rose higher in the heavens, they thought it wise to retrace their steps. All of them were crowned with wreaths of oak-leaves, their hands full of flowers and fragrant herbs, so that anyone meeting them on the way, might with justice have said, "These are not meant for death, but if it does take them, it will find them in the height of joy."

So, step by step, they sought their way homeward, enlivening their walk with songs and jests and carefree chatter, until at last they came to the palace, where they found everything set for them, and the servants waiting, blithe and merry. They rested for a while, but they would not hear of going to dinner until they had sung together at least half a dozen songs, each jollier than the other. That pleasant duty done, they washed, and the steward assigned them their places at table, according to the queen's wish, when the courses were served and they fell to with cheer and relish.

After dinner they gave themselves up to dancing and playing for a time, when, at the queen's pleas-

ure, all who wished retired to take their siesta. However, when the accustomed hour drew nigh, they all gathered at their usual meeting-place for the story-telling, and the queen, turning to Filomena, requested her to inaugurate the business of the day. Smiling, Filomena began:



FRANCESCA is besieged by the attentions of two gallants, Rinuccio and Alessandro; but as she loves neither, she gets rid of both by imposing on one the task of getting into a tomb, and on the other, of carrying him out. They cannot follow her command to the full, and so she is freed of their importunities.

My lady, since it is your wish for me to run the first course in the free and open expanse you were so generous to allow us for our story-telling, I shall be glad to obey, for I am sure that if I acquit myself well, those who follow will do equally, if not better.

We have often had proof before, from our stories, charming ladies, of how great and various are the powers of love, though even if we were to treat no other theme for a year on end, I fear we couldn't do full justice to it. We know that not only does love bring the lovelorn to the brink of death, but sometimes it may even persuade them to violate the abiding-places of the dead. On that subject, there's a story I'd like to tell you, in spite of the many already told, whereby you will not only appreciate the might of love, but also the cunning used by a noble lady in getting rid of two gallants who insisted on forcing their attentions upon her.

Well then, once upon a time, in the city of Pisa, there lived a comely widow with whom two banished Florentines, one called Rinuccio Palermini and the other Alessandro Chiarmontesi were

head over ears in love. Neither knew of his rival's suit, and therefore each did his best, on his own account, to gain her love. Now Francesca de' Lazzari, a lady of good family, had for a long time put up with the attentions of the two men, who pestered her with messages and entreaties, which at first she had unwisely encouraged, so that now that she wished to escape the predicament with some show of discretion, she found it quite a task. At last, after pondering how best to be rid of the nuisance, she hit upon the plan of imposing a duty upon them, which, though in the realm of possibility, she was certain neither of the two would be willing to accomplish. That being the case, she would then have a plausible and reasonable pretext for turning a deaf ear to all their pleas. Her plan was as follows.

That very day, there had died at Pistoia a man who, in spite of the nobility of his ancestry, had been considered the worst example of mankind who ever lived, not only in that town, but in the world at large. Moreover, he had been an ugly monster, so fierce and horrible to look at, that a man seeing him for the first time would have been terrified out of his wits. This horror, nicknamed the Ripper, had been laid in a sepulchre outside the walls of the church belonging to the friars Minor, and it was him Francesca thought most suitable for her design. Calling her maid, she said:

"You know what a source of annoyance and vexation are the messages I'm forever pestered with by those two Florentines, Rinuccio and Alessandro. Now I've not the least intention of favoring them with my love, and in order to get rid of them, I've made up my mind to put their elaborate promises to the test, by asking them to do something which I'm sure they'll never manage to accomplish. And thus I'll be free of a nuisance. Now listen to my plan.

"This morning, as you know, a man was buried in the cemetery of the friars—I mean none other than the Ripper, the sight of whom, alive, used to terrify the bravest men in town. You can imagine how much more terrible he must be, dead. Well, first of all, I want you to go secretly to Alessandro and say to him, 'My mistress Francesca says the time has come when you may have the love which you've been yearning for. You may even be alone with her, if you de-

sire, but this is how. To-night, for a reason you'll discover later, the body of the Ripper, who was buried this morning, will be brought to her house by one of her relatives. She's in mortal terror of the monster, dead though he is, and she would be very happy not to have him there. So she begs you, if you love her, to do her a special favor. To-night, when you would ordinarily be going to bed, betake yourself to the tomb where the Ripper is buried, put on the dead man's clothes and lie down in his place until they come for you. You mustn't venture to say a word, or even breathe, but simply let yourself be taken out of the tomb and carried to Francesca's house, where she'll receive you. Then you may stay with her and go when you will, and leave the rest for her to worry about.'

"If he agrees to do this, well and good. If not, tell him for me never to show his face to me again, and if he values his life, to refrain from plaguing me with any more of his letters and go-betweens. When you have settled with him, go to Rinuccio Palermi and say, 'My mistress Francesca says she is ready to grant your every pleasure, provided you do her a great service—simply this. To-night, toward twelve, go to the tomb where the Ripper was laid this morning, and without breathing a word what you may hear or see, take him out as quietly as you can, and carry him to her house. You'll find out there why she wanted him, and you will be rewarded by having your desire of her. If you don't care to do this, don't ever dare to send her any letters or messengers again.'"

The maid went to the respective gallants and delivered her messages, as she had been commissioned, whereupon each answered that if it was his lady's pleasure, he would not only be willing to go into a tomb, but into the very mouth of hell.

The maid went back with their answer to her mistress, who waited to see if they would be mad enough to be as good as their word.

When night had fallen, at about the hour when good folks go to bed, Alessandro Chiarmontesi, stripping to his waistcoat, set out of his house to take the Ripper's place in the sepulchre. While on his way, a terrifying thought entered his head, and he pondered, "Good Lord, what an ass I am! Where the deuce am I going? How do I know if the wom-

an's folks, realizing that I love her, and perhaps believing the worst, may not be up to this mischief in order to do away with me in the tomb? In that case, I'd be the one to get the worst of it, and not a word would be whispered against them in the outside world. And how do I know whether some enemy of mine may not have brought this upon me—some gentleman she may be in love with, and for whose sake she may be playing me this shabby trick?" And again he argued, "Granted none of these suppositions is true, and that her folks will really be carrying me to her house, I can't be so foolish as to think they wish to have the Ripper's body to dandle in their arms, or to deposit in hers. Indeed, it is more reasonable to suppose they intend to do it some violence, as the husk of the man who may have done something contrary to their pleasure in the past. She says I mustn't breathe a word, no matter what I see or hear. Well and good! But supposing they pry my eyes out, or draw my teeth, or cut off my hands, or do me some other dreadful injury? How could I keep quiet? On the other hand, if I should make a sound, they'd either know me, and perhaps give me the devil, or, if they did not harm me, they surely would not leave me alone with her. So all my trouble would be for nothing. Again, the woman might say I didn't abide by her injunctions, and she'll never consent to do anything to oblige me."

Reasoning in this fashion, he almost decided to go home, but still, the great love he bore her urged him on, with counter arguments of such persuasiveness that they brought him to the Ripper's tomb. Forcing it open, he entered; then, undressing the corpse, he put its clothes on his own back, shut the tomb upon himself, and stretched out in the dead man's place. Little by little, thoughts of what the man had been swarmed through his mind. Moreover, as he thought of the many stories he had heard, telling of dreadful accidents which had happened in the darkness of night, not only in the tombs of the dead, but in less frightful places, the hair of his body stood on end, and with every passing moment he saw the Ripper starting up and pouncing upon him, to slash him then and there. However, bolstered by his passionate love, he conquered these and other nightmares, and lying stiff and straight like a corpse, he resigned himself to await his adventure.

Toward midnight, Rinuccio left his house to execute the commands of his lady, and as he went his way, many and various were the fears that beset him, of the various things that might happen to him. He might fall into the clutches of the police, with the evidence of the Ripper's body upon his back, and be sentenced to the flames as a warlock. Or, if the thing leaked out, he might get into a bitter feud with the dead man's kin. Such, and similar considerations almost kept him from his purpose, but then, thinking the matter over, he said, "Well, well! Am I going to refuse the woman I've loved so much, and for whom I'm still consumed with passion—am I going to refuse her the first favor she has ever asked of me? And when I'm on the point of gaining her grace, at that? My word, even if I were sure to die in the attempt, it's up to me to do what I promised!"

Going bravely forward, he came to the sepulchre and had no difficulty in pushing it open. Alessandro, from within, hearing it open, was seized with mortal terror, but still he did not utter a sound. Rinuccio entered, and believing he was taking the Ripper's body, grasped Alessandro by the feet, and dragged him out of the tomb. Then, heaving him upon his shoulders, he started for Francesca's house.

On he walked, having no thought for anything but his destination, knocking his load now against a corner and now against a pile of benches lying on the street, for the night was so dark and murky that he could scarcely see where he was going. Finally, he had nearly reached the street-door of his lady, who had been watching with her maid from the windows, to see if Rinuccio would bring Alessandro, and was ready with a pretext at her tongue's end, to send them both about their business, when a party of police, who had been quietly lying in wait in that neighborhood to fall upon a certain outlaw, heard the shuffling of Rinuccio's feet. Suddenly flashing a light, to see what was happening and what course to follow, they shook their targets and halberds, shouting, "Who goes there?"

Rinuccio knew them on the instant. There was little time for deliberation so, dropping his burden, he took to his heels as fast as his legs could carry him. Alessandro quickly jumped to his feet, and in spite of the encumbrance of the dead man's

shroud, which was very long, skipped away in his turn.

Meanwhile, in the circle of light thrown by the officers' lantern, Francesca had plainly distinguished Rinuccio, with Alessandro close at his heels. She had also noted that the latter was dressed in the Ripper's grave-clothes, and wondered greatly at the two men's daring. In spite of her amazement, however, she could not help bursting into a peal of laughter at seeing Alessandro thrown off like a dead-weight, and then seeing both men scamper nimbly away.

The untoward chance rejoiced her exceedingly, and thanking the Lord for having delivered her of their importunities, she turned into the house and retired to her room, both she and her maid agreeing that the two men must indeed have loved her greatly to accomplish, as it seemed, the tasks she had imposed upon them.

In the meantime, Rinuccio, chagrined and cursing his ill-luck, did not return home in spite of it all; but waiting until the police had left the neighborhood, returned to the place where he had dropped his burden, groping in the dark to see if he might find him and so finish his business. He did not find him, however, and thinking the police had carried the body away, returned home in the worst of humors. As for Alessandro, not knowing what else to do, he too went home, annoyed at the mishap, and without having the least notion of who the man might be who had carried him out of the tomb.

Next morning, when the sepulchre was found open and no trace of the Ripper's corpse visible, for Alessandro had thrown it into the bottom of the pit, all of Pistoia was in a hum of conjecture, many fools believing that the devils had come and carried the body away. But the lovers told Francesca in turn what each of them had done, and what had interfered with the complete execution of her command; then, apologizing for not carrying it through as they should have wished, they demanded her love and favor. The canny woman, however, pretended she believed neither the one nor the other, and got rid of them both by telling them outright that she would never consent to pleasure them in any way, since they had not carried out what she had requested them to do.

THE SECOND STORY

A LADY-ABBESS gets up hurriedly in the dark, to catch one of her nuns in bed with a lover, according to the accusations made to her. She herself had been in bed with a priest, and thinking to throw her wimple about her head, put on her lover's breeches instead. The accused nun sees the pantaloons and brings them to her attention, whereupon she is absolved, and is free to lie with her lover.

FILOMENA was now silent. The woman's wit in disposing of her unwelcome lovers received general commendation, while on the other hand, the daring presumption of the two gallants was deemed not love, but madness. Then the queen, turning blithely to Elisa, said, "You follow now." The girl began readily:

Dearest ladies, as we have heard, Francesca was truly skilful in getting rid of the nuisance of her lovers. But a young nun was even more so, in getting out of approaching danger by the help of fortune and a timely remark. As you know, there are many in the world who are arrant fools, and still set themselves up as preceptors and judges over others. However, as you will be able to gather from my story, fate sometimes shames them rightfully, as in the case of the abbess under whose rule the nun lived, of whom I am to tell.

Well, as you must all know, there is in Lombardy a certain convent famous for holiness and piety, in which, among other nuns, there once lived a noble damsel by the name of Isabetta, endowed with extraordinary beauty. One day, when a relative of hers came to see her at the grate, she fell in love with a handsome youth who happened to be with him. He, on his part, seeing her so beautiful, and grasping her desire with his eyes, was likewise inflamed with love of her. Nevertheless, they bore this passion of theirs a long time without fruit, though not without great torment. Both were eager for some approach, and finally the young man discovered a way of visiting his nun in all secrecy. She was pleased with his plan, and so not once, but many times he came to her, much to their mutual delight.

While this state of affairs was going on, one night he was discovered by one of the nuns, unknown to Isabetta or himself, as he was taking leave

of her and going on his way. The woman communicated her find to a number of her sisters. At first, they decided with one accord to bring charges against Isabetta, before the lady abbess, Madam Usimbald, a good and holy woman, according to the opinion of the nuns and everyone who knew her. Then, to leave no room for denials on the young nun's part, they thought it best to have the abbess catch her *in flagrante* with her lover. They kept the matter hushed, therefore, and secretly posted themselves to spy upon her, each taking turns at playing sentinel.

Now Isabetta knew nothing of these trammels, nor took any precautions, and one night she had her lover come to her as usual. It soon came to the attention of the nuns spying upon her, who, choosing the proper moment, broke up into two bands, when a goodly part of the night had passed, one group stationing itself at the door of Isabetta's cell, while the other hastened to the abbess' room. Knocking repeatedly at the door until she answered, they cried, "Hurry, mother! Get up right away! We've discovered that Sister Isabetta has a young man in her cell!"

As it happened, that night the abbess was enjoying the company of a priest, whom she often had carried to her in a chest. When she heard the nuns' excitement, she was afraid that in their eagerness they might burst the door open, so jumping out of bed in all haste, she dressed herself in the dark as best she could. Such was her hurry, that thinking she had laid hold of certain plaited veils which nuns wear on their heads and call a wimple, she seized, instead, the good priest's breeches, and without noticing what she was about, threw them over her head instead of the headdress and went out, shutting the door quickly behind her.

"Where's this creature accursed of God?" she cried. Then, with the rest of the nuns, who were too anxiously bent on catching Isabetta in error to notice what the abbess was wearing on her head, she came to the door of the girl's cell. With the help of the other nuns she broke it open, and entering the room, found the two lovers in bed, locked in each other's arms, so taken aback at their sudden discovery that they remained stock still, not knowing what to do.

Immediately, the girl was taken by the nuns, and at the lady abbess' orders carried off to the chap-

ter-house for judgment. The young man, left behind in the room, dressed himself and remained to see the outcome of the case, determined at the least harm to Isabetta to take vengeance on all and sundry who came within his reach, and carry his mistress away with him.

In the chapter-house, meanwhile, the abbess sat in judgment, surrounded by all the sisters, intent, all of them, on staring only at the culprit, and she began to heap the vilest opprobrium upon her head. If the scandal were known to the outside world, she said, the holiness and virtue and good repute of the convent would be sullied, and all because of her foul and shameless practices. And as though the reproach were not enough, she added threat to injury.

Isabetta, timid and shamed by the consciousness of guilt, did not know what to answer, and her silence aroused pity in the breasts of the other nuns. Still, as the abbess redoubled the eloquence of her preachment, Isabetta raised her head, and her eyes fell on the lady's headdress, the trowser-legs of which were draped on either side of her face. Guessing what it meant, she plucked up courage and said, "Mother—the Lord have mercy on you!—tie up your wimple and then scold me to your heart's content."

The abbess, not knowing what she meant, "What wimple are you talking about, vile jade?" she asked. "Have you the face to joke at such a time? I suppose you think you can laugh at what you've done!"

Again the girl insisted, "Mother, please tie up your wimple, and then you may revile me as you wish."

At her words, many of the nuns looked up at the abbess' head, and the moment she raised her hand to it, she realized, with the rest, why Isabetta spoke as she did. Immediately, the abbess knew her own guilt. She saw, moreover, that it had been apparent to them all beyond any excuse she might trump up, and changed the tone of her sermon. Proceeding therefore, in quite a different strain, she concluded that it was impossible for frail human nature to defend itself against the stings of the flesh, and advised each and everyone of them to gather rosebuds while she might, as discreetly as they had been doing until that day. Furthermore, releasing Isabetta from all punishment, she went back to sleep with her priest, while the girl repaired to her lover, whom she invited to her bed many and many a time, in

spite of those who looked upon her with envy. As for the nuns who had no lovers, they tried their luck in secret as best they could.



AT the suggestion of Bruno, Buffalmacco and Nello, Dr. Simon makes Calandrino believe he is pregnant, as a result of which the patient gives them capons and money for medicines, recovering in the end without being delivered.

AFTER Elisa had finished her story, and all the ladies had rendered thanks to God for so felicitous a rescue of the young nun from the fangs of her envious sisters, the queen requested Filostrato to continue, who began without awaiting further orders:

Loveliest of ladies, the ill-bred clodhopper of a judge, of whom I told you yesterday, took out of my very mouth a story about Calandrino, that I wanted to tell you. Even though we have had a great deal about him and his cronies, I shall tell you the one I had in mind yesterday, knowing as I do that whatever we say of him can only add to our fun.

We're already sufficiently well-acquainted with Calandrino and the rest mentioned in this story, so without wasting words, I shall plunge right into it. You must know that an aunt of Calandrino's happened to die and bequeathed him eight-hundred lire. On receiving his inheritance, he began to talk about wanting to buy a farm, and consulted the real-estate agents of Florence, as though he had had ten thousand florins in gold at his command. As it was, the deal always came to naught when they arrived at the price of the property.

Bruno and Buffalmacco, aware of what was going on, had told him many a time that he would be doing a much more sensible thing if he spent the money on a good time with them, instead of bothering to buy land, as though he wanted to play with mud-pies. But far from convincing him to follow their suggestion, they had never even succeeded in getting him to treat them to a dinner.

One day, as the two companions were complaining of his stinginess, a friend of theirs, an artist by the name of Nello, joined them, and the three deliberated on a way to ease their dry throats at Calandrino's expense. They soon decided upon a course

to follow, and without allowing time to slip by, the following morning they watched for him to leave his house. Scarcely had he walked a few steps, when Nello drew up to him, saying, "Good morning, Calandrino."

"God give you good morning and a good year," replied Calandrino. Nello seemed to hesitate to speak, and then riveted his eyes upon his friend's face.

"What are you staring at?" asked Calandrino.

"Was there anything wrong with you last night?" said Nello. "It seems to me you're not quite yourself to-day."

Calandrino at once began worrying about his health. "God help me! What do you mean?" he cried. "What do you suppose is the matter with me?"

"Goodness only knows," said Nello. "But you look strangely altered to me. Perhaps I'm only imagining it, though." And with that he let him go his way.

Calandrino walked on, full of concern, though he felt perfectly well. Buffalmacco, however, was not far away, and on seeing him leave Nello, approached him with the greeting, "Is there anything the matter with you?"

"I don't know," replied Calandrino. "Just now Nello was saying he found me quite changed. Is it possible I may be ill?"

"I should think something must be wrong with you," said Buffalmacco. "You look half dead!"

Calandrino felt the fever rising in him. Suddenly, up popped Bruno, who, before saying anything else, cried, "Why, Calandrino! What sort of face is that? You look like a corpse! What ails you, friend?"

Calandrino, hearing what each of them had to say, was convinced he must be seriously ill, and showing his trepidation on his face, asked, "What should I do?"

"In my opinion," Bruno suggested, "you had better go home and get straight into bed under a lot of blankets, to keep you warm. Then send a specimen of your urine to Dr. Simon, who's much beholden to us, and he'll tell you immediately what you have to do. We'll come along with you, and if there's anything to be done, we'll do it."

Nello joined the party, and all of them returned home with Calandrino, who hastened in a funk to his bedroom, saying to his wife, "Come and cover me up warm! I feel awfully sick."

He was quickly put to bed, and a specimen of his urine sent by a little servant-wench to Dr. Simon, who then had his office in Oldcheap at the sign of the Pumpkin. Said Bruno to his cronies:

"You stay here with Calandrino, while I hurry to the doctor and find out what he has to say. If there's any urgent need, I'll have him come here with me."

"Go, go by all means, dear friend," Calandrino urged. "Hurry, and let me know what the matter is, for I feel the devil only knows what's inside of me!"

Bruno hurried away to the doctor's, and got there before the little servant-girl with the urine. He told Dr. Simon how the case stood, so that when the wench arrived and the doctor examined the specimen, he said to her, "Go and tell Calandrino to keep himself covered up warm. I'll be over right away and tell him what's wrong with him and how to take care of himself."

The girl delivered his message to her master, and it was not long before Bruno arrived with the doctor, who sat down beside the patient and felt his pulse. After a few moments' reflection, he said to Calandrino, while his wife was in the room, "Listen to me, Calandrino, as friend to friend, there's nothing in the world the matter with you, except that you're pregnant."

The moment Calandrino heard the doctor's pronouncement, he howled and shrieked in despair, saying, "Woe! Woe! Poor, unhappy me! It's all your fault, Tessa, for always wanting to lie on top. I told you so! I warned you!"

Mistress Tessa, a most virtuous woman, flushed scarlet with shame at the remark, and bowing her head, slunk out of the room without saying a word, as Calandrino went on moaning, "Alas! Woe is me! What shall I do? How can I give birth to this child? Where is it going to come from? I see clearly that this is the end of me, and all because of the crazy itch of this wife of mine, may the Lord give her as much sorrow as I want joy in life! Oh, if only I were as well as I should be! I'd get up and give her the beating of her life, until she hadn't a whole bone left in her body! Though it serves me right! I should never have consented to let her ride on top. But I swear, if ever I get out of this alive, she can die of desire, before I let her do it again!"

Bruno, Buffalmacco and Nello were almost burst-

ing with repressed laughter, hearing him carry on in that fashion. Still, they kept a straight face, though Dr. Addlepate broke into such uproarious guffaws, that you might have pulled every tooth out of his mouth. When at last Calandrino placed himself at the doctor's mercy, begging him to give him help and counsel in his predicament, "Don't be discouraged, Calandrino," he said, "for God be praised, we have discovered the cause of your sickness early enough for me to rid you of it in a few days, without much trouble. But you must be prepared to spend a little money."

"For God's sake, doctor dear," cried Calandrino. "Rid me of it, by all means. I've eight-hundred lire, with which I meant to buy a farm. If you need it all, take every cent of it, only don't let me bear a child! God knows how I'd ever be able to go through with it, considering the way women behave when they're about to be delivered, though they're well provided with the means of doing it. Upon my word, if I had to bear that pain, I'd die before I succeeded in giving birth!"

"Don't worry your head about such things," said Dr. Simon. "I'll have them prepare a certain draught of distilled waters for you, that's pleasant to the taste, indeed, very delicious. In three days it will rid you of everything, and leave you healthier than a fish. But you must be sensible in the future, and not get into any more of these silly scrapes. As for that medicinal water, we must have three pairs of good, fat capons. For other necessary minor items, give one of your friends here twenty lire to buy them with, and let everything be delivered to my office. Tomorrow morning I'll send you that distilled beverage without fail, and you'll begin the cure at once, by drinking a tumblerful of it at a time."

"Doctor dear," said Calandrino, "I'm entirely at your mercy." Then giving Bruno twenty lire in change and money besides for three pairs of capons, he begged him to look after the purchases for his sake.

The doctor went away, and ordering a clear beverage to be prepared for Calandrino, sent it to him. Bruno, in the meantime, bought the capons and other delicacies required for the feast; and the three friends and the doctor made short work of them.

Three mornings in succession Calandrino drank the clear draught, at the end of which period the

doctor and his three friends came to pay him a visit. Dr. Simon felt his pulse.

"You're perfectly well now, Calandrino, no doubt about it," he said. "You needn't stay home any more on this account, but go safely about your affairs from now on."

Calandrino got out of bed, rejoicing, and took care of his business, praising Dr. Simon's marvelous cure in no mean terms to every one he chanced to meet. It had rid him of his pregnancy in three days, without the least discomfort, he exclaimed. Bruno, Buffalmacco and Nello were pleased with themselves for having known how to get the better of Calandrino's stinginess through their trickery, though Mistress Tessa, discovering it, gave her husband many an earful for his credulity.

THE FOURTH STORY

CECCO Fortarrigo gambles at Buonconvento and loses all his goods as well as the money of his master, Cecco Angiolieri, whom he pursues in his shirt. Then, accusing Angiolieri of having robbed him, he has him captured by some peasants, and putting on his clothes, rides away on his horse, leaving the poor fellow almost naked.

CALANDRINO'S accusation of his wife had roused the whole company to peals of mirth, but when Filostrato was silent, Neifile began at the queen's bidding:

Noblest ladies, if it weren't a greater task for men to demonstrate their virtue and wisdom to others, than it is for them to make a show of their foolishness and vice, many a man would strive in vain to curb his tongue. This has been clearly shown you by Calandrino's perversity. What need was there for him to drag his wife's secret pleasures into the open, if he wished to be cured of the illness his stupidity caused him to believe he had? This story calls up an entirely different one to my mind—in short, of how one man's craftiness got the better of another's prudence, to the harm and shame of the one who was imposed upon, as I shall tell you.

Not so many years ago, there lived in Siena two youths who had already reached man's estate. Both of them were called Cecco, though one was the son of Angiolieri, and the other of Fortarrigo. Despite their dissimilarity in most instances, they agreed in

one respect, namely in the hatred they bore their fathers. That one point so linked them together, that they had become fast friends and were very often to be found together. Soon, however, Angiolieri, who was a personable and courteous youth, seeing he could scarcely make both ends meet in Siena on the allowance his father gave him, decided to go to the Marches of Ancona, where he had heard a great patron of his, a cardinal, had been sent as papal legate. There, thought Angiolieri, he might perhaps succeed in improving his financial condition. He communicated his intention to his father, and arranged with him to receive his six months' allowance in a lump sum, so that he might furnish himself with a horse and the necessary trappings befitting a gentleman. The only thing lacking was a servant for his journey, and when Fortarrigo heard what he desired, he immediately presented himself to his friend, begging him as earnestly as he could, to employ him. "I shall be your valet and bodyguard and everything else," he said, "and I'll take no salary if my expenses are paid."

Angiolieri demurred, saying he had no objection to make to his ability, for he knew he could do anything required of him. But he was fond of gambling, and what's more, he sometimes got himself all befuddled with drink.

"I'll keep myself from gambling and drinking, I promise," said Fortarrigo, and swore so many solemn oaths, backed by touching entreaties, that Angiolieri at last yielded and said he was willing.

Accordingly, they set out together on their journey, and stopped off for dinner at Buonconvento. The weather was unbearably sultry, therefore after dinner Angiolieri had his bed prepared at the hostelry, and undressing, with Fortarrigo's assistance, lay down for a nap.

"Call me punctually at three," he said to his friend.

The moment Angiolieri had fallen asleep, Fortarrigo hastened to the tavern. Drink flowed free, and presently he began gambling with a group of men, who soon relieved him of what little money he had and of his clothes in the bargain. Anxious to retrieve his fortune, he mounted to Angiolieri's room, just as he was, in his shirt, and seeing he was fast asleep, took every cent out of his purse. Again he returned to the gaming-table, losing his master's money as he had lost his own.

Meanwhile, Angiolieri awoke, got up, and called for Fortarrigo. He was nowhere in sight. Thinking he must be sleeping off the effects of drink in some corner, as he often did, Angiolieri resolved to leave him behind and provide himself with another valet at Corsignano. He had his horse bridled, and the pack-saddles put on its back; but when he tried to discharge his debt to the host and so take his leave, he found himself penniless.

Great was the uproar that ensued. The whole inn was turned upside down, as Angiolieri insisted he had been robbed there and threatened to have everyone, host and all, arrested and taken to Siena.

Suddenly, along came Fortarrigo in his shirt, on his way to despoil his master of his clothes, as he had robbed him of his money. Seeing Angiolieri about to take horse, "What's this, friend?" he cried. "Are we going already? Wait a minute! Hold your horse! There's a fellow coming here in a little while, who's taken my waistcoat in pawn for thirty-eight francs. If you redeem it right away, I'm sure he'll let me have it for thirty-five."

He was still speaking when a man joined them, who convinced Angiolieri that Fortarrigo had stolen his money, by showing him the sum the scapegrace had gambled away.

His anger was great, and many were the rebukes he heaped upon his head. Indeed, if he had not been more in fear of the people about him than of God himself, he would have made him pay dearly for his fault. But threatening to have the culprit hanged by the neck or run out of Siena, he mounted his horse. Fortarrigo, however, taking no more heed of Angiolieri's words than if they had been addressed to someone else, resumed:

"For heaven's sake, friend, enough of this foolish talk that doesn't lead us anywhere and let's get down to business. Listen, if we redeem the waistcoat right away, we can have it for thirty-five francs, whereas if we let it go till to-morrow, he won't take a cent less than the thirty-eight he advanced me on it. He's doing it as a special favor, too, as I pawned it on his advice. Come, now, be a good fellow! Why shouldn't we have the benefit of the three francs?"

Angiolieri was well nigh driven frantic by this nonsense, especially when he saw the bystanders looking at him suspiciously, as if they thought that

Fortarrigo had not robbed *him*, but that he himself was withholding the rogue's money.

"What the devil have I to do with your waistcoat?" he was saying. "Would to heaven you were dancing a jig at the end of a rope! First you steal my money, then you gamble it away, and now you keep me from going on my way, and make a fool of me in the bargain!"

Fortarrigo still held his ground, as though Angiolieri's words were not meant for him. "Hell," he exclaimed. "Why don't you want to save me these three francs? Don't you think I'll be able to let you have them some other time? Come, be a sport, if you care for me. Why are you in such a hurry? We'll get to Torrenieri before sundown. Come, find the purse. Why, if I were to turn all Siena upside down, I wouldn't be able to find another waistcoat to fit me so trim! And to think I surrendered it to that fellow for thirty-eight francs! It's worth forty francs, or even more, so I'll be the loser both ways if you don't help me."

Angiolieri was at the end of his patience, first, at being robbed, and then made a laughing-stock by the scamp's words. Without deigning to answer, he turned his horse's head and entered the road leading to Torrenieri.

Fortarrigo suddenly thought of a cunning expedient, and set off as he was behind his master, at a run, and in his shirt, clamoring for his waistcoat. For two miles he followed him, and while Angiolieri spurred on his horse, to be out of earshot of the nuisance, the scoundrel caught sight of some peasants a little farther on the road, who were working in a field. "Stop thief! Stop thief!" he cried to them, at the top of his lungs.

Immediately, they barred the way before Angiolieri, some of them wielding spades, others mattocks, and inferring that he must have robbed the man who was shouting after him in his shirt, took him prisoner. In vain he struggled to make them understand who he was and explain the true facts of the case.

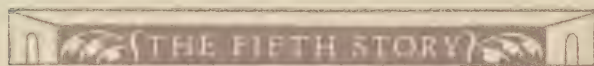
Fortarrigo came up, and mad with rage, cried, "I don't know what's keeping me from butchering you on the spot, thieving knave, running off with my belongings!" And turning to the peasants, he said, "See what a pickle he left me in, after he squandered all his money gambling! I can say with justice

that I owe the little that I'm recovering to God and you, gentlemen, and you may be sure I'll always remember you kindly for your service."

Angiolieri, on his part, gave his version of the story, but his words fell on empty air. He was forced from his horse, and there, on the ground, Fortarrigo undressed him with the help of the peasants, and then donned the clothes himself. Getting to horse, he left Angiolieri barefoot and in his shirt, and returned to Siena, declaring to all that he had won his master's horse and finery through gambling.

And so the poor wretch, who had intended going like a gentleman to the cardinal in the Marches, made the best of his way to Buonconvento, penniless and almost naked, not venturing to go back to Siena for very shame. Some clothes were procured for him, however, and mounting Fortarrigo's nag, he repaired to his folks at Corsignano, with whom he stayed until his father again came to his rescue.

And so Fortarrigo's craftiness got the better of Angiolieri's good intentions, though you may be sure the rogue's knavery was not left unpunished by the victim, when the occasion offered.



CALANDRINO becomes infatuated with a young woman, whereupon Bruno writes him a charm, at the touch of which she is bound to follow him. Mistress Tessa surprises him, and he is made to pay the piper.

WHEN Neifle's short story was ended and the company had let it pass without too much laughter or discussion, the queen turned to Fiammetta, requesting her to continue.

"Willingly, my lady," she replied, and began:

Most gracious friends, you know, I'm sure, there is nothing, however hackneyed, that will fail to give pleasure, if only the person who speaks of it knows how to choose the proper moment and place for it. Now when I consider why we are here—chiefly, I believe, to amuse ourselves and have a good time—I think that anything that tends to give us occasion for mirth and joy, has both its due time and place. Indeed, even though we may have recurred to the subject a thousand times, it should be every bit as enjoyable if we recur to it again. Many a time we've talked of Calandrino's antics and funny

sayings, but still, believing with Filostrato that they're all very amusing, I'll take the liberty of telling you another story about him, although, if I had wished to avoid the issue, I could easily have managed to conceal the source, and given it to you under other names. Still, as the listener's pleasure is greatly diminished if one departs from the actual facts, I shall for that reason present the story as it is.

Nicolo Cornacchini, one of our fellow-citizens and a rich man, owned, among other property, a handsome plot of land at Camerata, where he had a fine, noble villa built, which he arranged with Bruno and Buffalmacco to decorate for him. There was much work to be done, therefore the friends recruited Nello and Calandrino, and all settled down to the task in good earnest.

Now although several rooms of the villa were provided with beds and other necessary pieces of furniture, and an old woman lived there as a sort of guardian, none of the owners ever came to the villa, except a son of Nicolo's, by the name of Filippo. He was a young, lusty sprig, and as he had no wife, he sometimes invited a woman there for his pleasure, entertained her for a day or two, and then bid her good-bye.

As it happened, he once took with him a certain Niccolosa, who was kept in a house at Camaldoli by a pimp who used her both for his own ends and loaned her to others for money. This Niccolosa was a fine figure of a woman, well-dressed, and for one of her calling, courteous and soft-spoken. One day, toward noon, she chanced to come out of her apartment in a white petticoat, with her hair twined about her head, and just as she was busy washing her hands and face at a well in the middle of the court, Calandrino came out to draw water. He greeted her familiarly, and she returned his greeting, staring at him the while, more because he struck her as a peculiar bird, than for any pleasure she got out of it. Encouraged, he too, cast sheep's eyes at her, and finding her a personable woman, thought of all kinds of excuses for lingering there with her, unmindful of his companions, who were waiting for him to return with the water. Niccolosa observing the way he ogled her, threw him a tempting glance now and then, with a little sigh thrown in, simply to tease him. That was all Calandrino needed to

lose his heart completely to her, and he did not budge from the well-side until the woman was called in by Filippo.

Back at his task, Calandrino did nothing but heave heart-rending sighs, which Bruno could not fail to perceive, interested as he still was in his friend's antics, for the sport they afforded him.

"What the devil ails you, partner?" he asked. "You do nothing but sigh and sigh."

"Partner," replied Calandrino, "if only I had someone to help me, I'd get along first rate."

"How's that?" asked Bruno.

"You mustn't tell a soul," Calandrino informed him, "but there's a girl up here lovelier than a fairy princess. She's so mad with love for me, that you'd be surprised! I noticed it just now, when I went to fetch water."

"Good heavens!" cried Bruno. "Be careful you're not getting mixed up with Filippo's wife!"

"I guess that's who she must be," said Calandrino, "for he called her and she went into his room. But what of it? I'd snatch her from Christ himself, to say nothing of Filippo. But to tell you the truth, comrade, I love her so much that I can hardly express myself."

Bruno said, "Comrade, I'll find out for you who she is, and if she is Filippo's wife, I'll pave the way for you with a word, for she's a great friend of mine. The question is, how can we keep the thing from Buffalmacco? I can never exchange so much as a word with her, without his prowling around."

"He's the least of my worries," said Calandrino. "We'd better watch out for Nello, though. He's Tessa's cousin, and he would upset everything."

"You're quite right about that," agreed Bruno.

Now Bruno knew perfectly well who the woman was, as he himself had seen her come. Furthermore, Filippo had told him about her. Well, no sooner did Calandrino quit work and go out for a glimpse of his flame, than Bruno informed Nello and Buffalmacco of the whole affair, and together they arranged what they were to do about this infatuation of his. As soon as Calandrino returned, Bruno said in a whisper, "Did you see her?"

"Alas, yes!" he sighed. "She has killed me with her eyes!"

"I want to go and see if she's the one I mean,"

said Bruno, "and if she is, well—leave the rest to me."

Bruno went down, and finding Filippo and Niccolosa, he told them what sort of bird Calandrino was, and all that he had confessed about his love. Then, arranging with them what they were to do and say, to have a good time at the expense of the lovelorn Calandrino, he returned to him and said, "That's she, all right, so you had better carry on your affair with the greatest discretion, because if Filippo ever came to know of it, all the water in the Arno could not wash you clean again. But what is it you'd like me to tell her for you, if I get a chance to speak to her?"

"My word," said Calandrino, "tell her first of all that I wish her a thousand quarts of that wonderful bounty that makes the belly grow, and that I'm her humble slave, and that if she wants anything—you understand, don't you?"

"Indeed I do," said Bruno, "so leave everything to me."

When supper-time drew nigh, the artists left their work and went down to the court, and as Filippo and Niccolosa were there, they remained a while for the sake of Calandrino, who began rolling his eyes at her and going through such antics that even a blind man would have noticed them. Niccolosa, on her part, did everything she could to add fuel to his fire, while Filippo, following Bruno's instructions, had a good time of it, though he pretended to be engaged in conversation with Buffalmacco and Nello, and unaware of all that was going on. Finally the painters went away, to Calandrino's great disappointment. As they were nearing Florence, "Ah, Calandrino," said Bruno, "I can assure you you've made her melt like ice in the sun. By heaven, if you brought your rebec and sang her a couple of love-songs to its accompaniment, I warrant she'd throw herself out of the window to get to you."

"Do you think so, partner?" he asked. "Do you think I'd win her?"

"No doubt about it," Bruno assured him, and Calandrino continued, "You wouldn't believe me this morning when I told you about it. But my word, partner, I see I'm a better hand than anybody else in carrying out what I want to do. Who, if not I, could have succeeded in making a grand lady like that fall madly in love with me, and in such a short

time? Certainly, none of your boastful young cock-reels, who go gadding about the live-long day and couldn't manage to pick three handfuls of nuts in a thousand years! Just wait till you see me with my instrument. That's a sight for sore eyes! Besides, I want you to understand that I'm not as old as I look, as she could see for herself, the dear wench! But I'll convince her even more when I get my hands on her. By the true body, I'll hand her such good sport, that she'll follow me like crazy Meg after her child."

"Yes, sir, you'll handle her good and proper," Bruno humored him, "I can just see you, with those buck-teeth of yours, biting that pretty little red mouth, and her cheeks fresh as twin roses, and then eating her all up!"

Listening to Bruno, Calandrino imagined himself in the act, and went warbling and capering so merrily, that he could scarcely stay in his breeches. The following day he brought along his instrument, and to the huge amusement of the whole party, sang a number of songs to its accompaniment. In short, he was so pricked with longing for the merest glimpse of his lady, that he no longer paid any heed to his work, and at least a thousand times a day he would rush to the window, or the door, or into the court, though truth to tell, Niccolosa, cleverly following Bruno's precepts, gave the love-sick loon reason enough to keep him hopping. To make matters worse, Bruno fabricated his own answers to the messages Calandrino sent her, and even brought him others which purported to come from her. Whenever she was not there, which was a good part of the time, he delivered him letters, in which Bruno had her encourage his desire, as she pretended she was spending some time at home with her relatives, where he could not possibly come to see her.

And so Bruno kept up the deception with the help of Buffalmacco. They had huge sport at the witlessness of Calandrino, from whom, ostensibly at his lady's instance, they first extracted an ivory comb, then a purse, and again a penknife or some such trifle, giving him in exchange all kinds of imitation gold rings of no value, with which he seemed tickled to death. But that was not all, for the better to further his assiduous courtship, Calandrino gave the two rogues many dinners and countless tokens of gratitude.

After they had kept him on tenter hooks for about two months, without allowing him to advance a step farther in his suit, Calandrino, considering that the painting was nearly finished, and that if he did not bring his love to fulfilment before then, he might never have another chance to do so, redoubled the fervor of his prayers and solicitations to Bruno. Accordingly, on Niccolosa's next visit to the villa, Bruno first came to an understanding with her and Filippo on the course they were to follow, and then said to Calandrino, "Listen, comrade! This lady has assured me at least a thousand times that she's willing to do anything you wish, and then she does nothing at all. It strikes me that she's leading you by the nose, so since she won't stick to her promise, we'll bring her to it willy-nilly. How do you feel about it?"

"Do it, by all means!" said Calandrino. "And for God's sake, do it soon!"

"Well," said Bruno, "do you feel equal to touching her with a charm I'll give you?"

"Most assuredly," he replied.

"Very well, then," said Bruno. "See to it that you get me a bit of parchment from an unborn sheep, a live bat, three grains of incense, and a candle that's been blessed, and leave the rest to me."

All that night Calandrino was busy with snares of his own invention to catch a bat, and when at last he captured one, he hurried off to bring it to Bruno, together with the other items. Withdrawing to an adjoining room, Bruno daubed some stuff and nonsense on the parchment, with certain preparations he had, and then, handing the script to him, said, "Calandrino, you must know that the moment you touch her with this charm, she'll come after you right away and do anything you wish. Now if Filippo should happen to go anywhere to-day, get near her, somehow or other, touch her with this, and then go to the hayloft near by. It's the best place here for your purposes, and nobody ever goes in there. You'll see, she'll follow you, and once you have her, you know mighty well what to do."

Calandrino was beside himself with joy, and taking the parchment, said, "Partner, leave that to me!"

Meanwhile Nello, of whom Calandrino was very wary, was having as much fun out of this love-affair as the rest, and played his part in befooling

him. At Bruno's suggestion, he went to the gallant's wife in Florence.

"Tessa," he said, "you remember how mercilessly Calandrino beat you for no reason at all, the day he came back from the Mugnone loaded with stones. I want you to give him tit for tat, and if you don't, never look upon me as your cousin and friend again. He's infatuated with a woman up there, a slut shameless enough to shut herself up in a room with him. A little while ago, they made an appointment to meet again this very day, so I'd like you to come along and surprise him, and give him a good piece of your mind."

On hearing what Nello had to say, Mistress Tessa thought it no matter for sport, and starting to her feet, shrilled, "What, filthy scoundrel that you are! Is that the way you treat me? By God's own cross, things won't turn out as you think! I'll pay you for it, all right!"

Seizing a mantle, she took along a servant-girl to bear her company, and away she went at a good speed to the villa, as Nello led the way.

The moment Bruno caught sight of him from a distance, he said to Filippo, "Here comes our friend," whereupon Filippo hastened to the room where Calandrino and the rest were at work. "Friends," he said, "I shall be obliged to leave for Florence very soon, so keep busy."

With that, he left them and went to hide in a secret place, from where he could see all that Calandrino might do, without being seen himself.

Now the moment the amorous lout thought Filippo well on his way, he descended into the court, and finding Niccolosa all alone, chatted gaily with her, as she, well-informed of the rôle she was to play, toyed with him more familiarly than usual. Emboldened, Calandrino touched her with the charm, and then, without another word, made for the barn, Niccolosa following close at his heels. No sooner was she there, than shutting the door, she threw her arms about Calandrino, and flinging him back upon the hay on the ground, she sat astride him, her hands pinning him down by the shoulders, so that he could not draw near her face. Gazing into his eyes, as though he were her heart's delight, "Ah, Calandrino," she sighed, "my sweetest heart of hearts, soul of my body, my treasure, my blissful peace!

How long have I yearned to hold you and embrace you! Your seductiveness has drawn every thread out of my smock! You've charmed my heart with your instrument. Ah, can it be true I hold you in my arms?"

Calandrino, scarcely able to budge, pleaded, "O my sweet soul, let me plant a kiss upon your lips!"

"You're in an awful hurry," said Niccolosa. "Let me first satiate my eyes with the sight of you! Ah, let me feast them on your beauteous face!"

In the meantime, Bruno and Buffalmacco joined Filippo in his hiding-place, and the three heard and saw what was going on. At last, as Calandrino tried to force his kisses on Niccolosa, in came Nello with Mistress Tessa. "I'll bet you they're together," he said, upon arriving. They had come to the door of the barn, when Mistress Tessa, in a frenzy of rage, gave it such a violent push with her hands, that she burst it open. And behold, as she entered, there was Niccolosa, mounted on Calandrino!

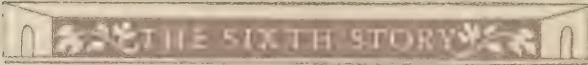
At the sight of the irate wife, up started Niccolosa, and away she fled, taking refuge in Filippo's hiding-place—and none too soon, for Mistress Tessa had pounced upon Calandrino, who had not yet got up, and clawing at his face, had left it a mass of scratches. Taking him by a tuft of his hair, she raved, pulling his head to and fro, "You filthy, shameful cur! Is that the way you treat me? Mad old wretch that you are! God curse the day I ever came to love you! So! You haven't enough to do at home, I suppose, and you think you can be loving other people's wenches! Look at that fine figure of a lover, if you please! Don't you know yourself, villain? Don't you know what you are, you miserable crone? Why, if you were squeezed dry, all the juice that's in you wouldn't make an ounce of sauce! By heaven, it wasn't your wife Tessa just now who was getting you pregnant!—God curse her, whoever she is!—a filthy trollop, surely, to find pleasure in such a gem as yourself!"

Now when Calandrino saw his wife coming upon him, he did not know whether he was dead or alive, and hadn't the courage to raise even a finger in his defense; but, picking himself up all scratched, peeled and confounded as he was, he took his cap and pleaded humbly with her not to scream so much, unless she wanted to see him made into mince-meat, as the woman who had been with him was the wife of the master of the house.

"All right," she said, "may the Lord give her a year of bad luck!"

Presently Bruno and Buffalmacco, who had enjoyed a hearty laugh at the scene, together with Filippo and Niccolosa, came in as though brought there by the noise. It took them no little persuasion to quiet Mistress Tessa. They advised Calandrino in all friendship to go back to Florence, as Filippo might play him a nasty trick if he ever learned what had happened.

And so Calandrino, mournful and crestfallen, with his body all peeled and scratched, returned to Florence, and never dared set foot at the villa again. But that was not all. By dint of the nagging and scolding which Mistress Tessa dealt him day and night, he was cured of his grand passion, after he had afforded Filippo, his mistress and his own friends a world of amusement.



Two young men spend a night at an inn, where one lies with the daughter of the host, while the host's wife inadvertently goes to bed with the other. But the one who had slept with the girl, gets into bed with her father, and tells him everything, believing him to be his companion. They quarrel, whereupon the host's wife, seeing what it is all about, slips into bed with her daughter, and restores harmony by explaining away the misunderstanding.

ONCE more Calandrino, who had amused the company many times before, gave them cause for laughter, and when the women had ceased talking over his antics, the queen commanded Pamfilo to continue.

Commendable ladies, he began, Niccolosa, the name of Calandrino's beloved, called to my mind the story of another Niccolosa. It will give me pleasure to relate it to you, as you will learn from it how a prudent woman's resourcefulness prevented a serious scandal.

Not so long ago, in a village of the Mugnone, there lived a goodman who used to lodge wayfarers overnight and give them food and drink as well, for money. Though he was poor, and had only a tiny house, he was sometimes of necessity obliged to accept not only strangers who passed by, but even various acquaintances.

Now this goodman had a fine, goodlooking wife, who had borne him two children—a handsome, sprightly lass, some fifteen or sixteen years old, as yet unmarried, and a baby-boy, not quite a year old, still nursing at his mother's breast.

As it was, a handsome debonair youth of our town, who used to go about in the country a great deal, happened to catch sight of the girl and fell madly in love with her; while she, mighty proud to have won the love of a young man of his class, used all her wiles to retain his affection and thereby lost her own heart to him. Many and many a time this love of theirs would have come to its desired fruition by common accord, had not Pinuccio (for such was the youth's name), scorned to bring shame upon himself and her.

But alas, his passion grew more and more urgent with every passing day, until he could no longer control his yearning to be with her. At last he decided to find a way of lodging at her father's house, confident, from his knowledge of the interior, that he could then spend the night with the girl, unknown to a living soul. No sooner did the plan enter his head, than he lost no time in putting it into execution.

Late one evening he hired two horses, which he fitted out with a pair of saddle-bags, perhaps filled with straw, and with Adriano, a friend of his, who was acquainted with his amour, left Florence and rode about a while until he came to the vale of Mugnone rather late at night. Once there, the two youths turned their horses' heads, as though they were returning from Romagna, and setting out for the goodman's house, knocked at the door. The man knew both of them quite well, and opened to them without delay.

"Friend," Pinuccio said to him, "I'm afraid you'll have to put us up for the night. We thought we'd be able to get to Florence early, but we miscalculated, so here we are at this time of night, as you see."

"Pinuccio," said the innkeeper, "you know how ill-equipped I am to lodge two young gentlemen like you. But since you're here and it's so late, and there's no time for you to go anywhere else, I'll gladly put you up for the night as best I can."

The two youths dismounted and went into the inn, where, after making their horses comfortable,

they supped with their host on the provisions they had taken care to bring along with them.

Now you must know that the man had only one very small bedroom, in which three little beds were set up, as the host thought best—two at the broad end of the room, and one along the width of them, at the narrower end, leaving only enough space for passing back and forth, though not without great difficulty. Of these three beds, the host had the least uncomfortable made ready for the two friends and saw to it that they retired. Then, when he thought they were fast asleep—which they made a great show of being, though neither of them slept—he had his daughter lie down on one of the remaining two, while he himself got into the third with his wife, who put her baby's crib along the side of the bed where she was lying.

When the accommodations had been so disposed, Pinuccio, who had observed the lay of the land, waited a while, and when he thought everyone was sleeping soundly, got up very cautiously and slipped into his beloved's bed. Joyfully he was welcomed, though very timidly, and no sooner had he lain down beside her, than they began taking that delight which both of them most desired.

Now while Pinuccio was in bed with the girl, the house cat threw some things down, the clatter of which awakened the innkeeper's wife. Not knowing what it might be, she jumped out of bed, and naked as she was, groped in the dark toward the place whence she had heard the noise. In the interim Adriano, without any thought of mischief, arose to obey a call of nature, and as he was on his way, found the crib where the woman had placed it, blocking the path. As he could not go a step farther without moving it, he lifted it from its place and set it beside his own bed. Then, after expediting what he had got up to do, he went back and lay down in his bed, without any thought of the cradle.

Meanwhile, the woman had investigated the clatter. Finding that what it had thrown down was not what she thought, she did not bother to make a light, but scolding the cat, returned to the bedroom, groping her way to the bed where her husband was sleeping. However, when she did not find the crib, "Lord help me!" she exclaimed to herself. "Imagine what I was about to do. Heavens, if I wasn't

about to get into our young gentlemen's bed!"

She groped her way onward a little farther, and coming to the cradle, she got into the bed alongside of which it stood, and lay down with Adriano, believing herself to be lying with her goodman. The youth had not yet fallen asleep. Perceiving what had happened, he greeted her with cheer and joy, and without breathing a word, boarded her and heaved her to his infinite relish.

When things had reached this pass, Pinuccio, afraid that sleep might surprise him in the arms of Niccolosa, rose from her side, having enjoyed her to his heart's content, and would have retired for a wink of sleep to his own bed. He found the cradle in the way, and thinking he had struck the host's bed, advanced a little farther and lay down in the other bed. The goodman, who was occupying it, awoke at the youth's touch, whereupon the lad, thinking it was his friend, said, "Believe me, there was never a girl as sweet as Niccolosa. I've enjoyed the greatest pleasure with her that ever any man had with a woman. I can swear! I tell you, I've gone into the woods more than six times since I left your side."

The host heard, and was by no means pleased. "What the devil is this fellow doing here?" he said to himself. Then aloud, more incensed than prudent, he said, "You did a wicked, villainous deed, Pinuccio. I can't understand why you should have done me this dishonor, but by the Lord, I'll make you pay dear for it!"

Pinuccio was no paragon of wisdom. Realizing his error, he did not try to retrieve it as best he could, but said, "What'll you make me pay for? What could you do to me?"

At the noise of their quarrel, the goodwife, thinking she was with her husband, whispered to Adriano, "Mercy on us! Listen to the way the two lodgers are quarreling together!"

"Let them quarrel and the devil take them," said Adriano, laughing. "They drank too much last night."

Now from the beginning, the woman thought she had heard her husband's angry voice, and at Adriano's words she knew at once where she had slept, and with whom. Like the discreet woman she was, she started up without a word, and taking the

infant's crib, groped with it in the unlighted room, to the bed where she guessed Niccolosa was sleeping. There she laid it down and got in beside her daughter. Presently, as if her husband's wrath had awakened her, she called him.

"What are you quarreling about there with Pinuccio?" she asked.

"Don't you hear?" he cried. "Don't you hear what he says he did to-night with Niccolosa?"

"He lies in his throat," she said. "He certainly wasn't with Niccolosa, for I've been lying here with her all night long and I haven't been able to get a moment's sleep. You're a fool for believing him. You men-folks drink entirely too much at night, and then, troubled by your drunken dreams, you go gadding about in your sleep, imagining you're doing Lord knows what! It's a pity you don't break your necks. Pray, what's Pinuccio doing there, and why doesn't he stay in his own bed?"

When Adriano saw how cleverly the woman was cloaking her daughter's shame and her own, he said in turn, "I told you a thousand times, Pinuccio, not to go roaming around. This sleepwalking of yours and your way of relating the nonsense you dream for gospel will get you into a nasty mess some day. Come back here to bed, damn your hide!"

At his wife's words and Adriano's corroboration, the goodman was firmly convinced Pinuccio had been dreaming, and taking him by the shoulders he shook him, and called him, saying, "Wake up! Wake up, Pinuccio! Go back to your own bed!"

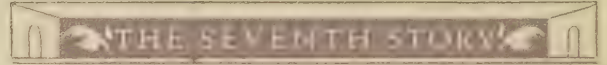
The young man by this time had gathered all that had been said, and like one in a trance uttered more stuff and nonsense, making the host roar with laughter. At last, pretending he had been roused by all the shaking, he called Adriano, saying, "Is it day already that you call me?"

"Yes, yes, come here!" said his friend.

Pinuccio then rose from beside his host, counterfeiting a doze and looking as sleepy-eyed as could be, and returned to bed with Adriano. The following day they arose and the goodman had a merry time laughing at Pinuccio and twitting him about his dreams. Thus, with one pleasantry and another, the young men attended to their horses, set the pack-saddles on their backs, and after drinking with the host, mounted their beasts and returned to Florence,

no less delighted with the adventure than with the outcome.

In after-days, Pinuccio found other ways of being with Niccolosa, who still insisted to her mother that the lad had been dreaming, while the goodwife, recalling Adriano's embraces, inwardly imagined that she alone must have been awake.



TALANO di Molese dreams that a wolf tears his wife's throat and face. He warns her, but she does not heed him, and the vision comes to pass.

WHEN Pamfilo's story was over and the good hostess' resourcefulness rewarded with general commendation, the queen called upon Pampinea, who obediently began:

We've had occasion before, adorable ladies, to speak of realities revealed in dreams, which, alas, many women are inclined to laugh at. In spite of what we have already said on that score, I'll not hesitate to tell you, in a very brief story, what happened to a neighbor of mine not so long ago, for not believing a vision that was revealed to her husband in sleep.

I don't know whether you are acquainted with Talano di Molese, a gentleman of great worth. Well, he married a young woman called Margarita, who surpassed all others in beauty, but was so capricious, disagreeable and self-willed that she would never condescend to follow anyone's advice or offer to be pleased with anything people ever did. Her evil disposition was quite a trial to Talano, but since he was powerless against it, he suffered it in silence.

One night, while Talano was staying with Margarita in one of his country-homes, in his sleep it seemed to him that he saw his wife walking through a beautiful greenwood, not very far from their house. And as he gazed at her wandering through it, he thought he saw a huge, fierce wolf spring out of a thicket and rush straight for her throat, forcing her to the ground, and struggling to drag her off to its lair, as she screamed for help. At last, it seemed to him that she tore herself free of its fangs, but her throat and face had been disfigured.

He was very much concerned by the vision, and when he arose the following morning, he said to his

wife, "Margarita, though your perversity has never suffered me to enjoy a day's bliss with you, I should still be most unhappy if anything ever happened to you, so take my advice and don't leave the house to-day."

"Why not?" she asked, whereupon he told her all that he had dreamed. Margarita only bowed her head and said, "He who wishes you ill, will dream ill dreams of you. You seem to be terribly concerned about me, but you dream the very things you'd like to see happening to me. Rest assured I'll take care to-day and forever not to give you joy of this misfortune, or any other you may wish me."

"I knew exactly that's the answer you would give me," answered Talano, "for that's what a fool must expect for his pains. Believe whatever you please, but I'm telling you this for your own good. I warn you again, stay home to-day, or at least beware of going into the woods."

"Very well, I'll take care," replied Margarita, but inwardly she said, "Just see how cunningly that fellow thinks he's frightened me from going into the woods to-day! I'll wager he must be planning to have a love-tryst in that very wood with some whore, and he doesn't want me to spy upon him! Oho, he's reckoning without his host! What an idiot I'd be if I didn't see through him and believed what he said! Ah, but it will fall through, that pretty plan of his! I'll catch him, even if I have to stay there all day, I'll see what sort of deal it is he wants to make to-day."

Accordingly, no sooner did her husband go out at one door, than she stole out at the other, and as stealthily as she could, made straight for the woods. Hiding in the densest part of it, she stood on guard, spying in all directions to see if anyone were coming.

Suddenly, as she lay there in hiding, thoughts of danger being farthest from her mind, a huge, terrible wolf sprang out of a thicket, and before she could even say, "God help me," it was already at her throat. Fiercely and fast it clutched her in its fangs, and made off with her as though she were a lamb.

She could not scream, so tight did it sink its fangs into her throat, nor could she help herself in any way. The brute would surely have strangled her as it dragged her off, had not a party of shepherds met it. Shouting and threatening, they made it release its grip, when the shepherds recognized Margarita and carried her home, a sad and wretched woman.

After many months under the doctor's care, the wounds were at last healed, but not without leaving the woman's throat and part of her face so terribly ravaged, that whereas she had once been beautiful, she was from then on ugly and disfigured. She was ashamed to appear in public places, and all too often she bewailed her stubbornness in refusing to believe her husband's veracious dream, when it would have cost her nothing.

THE EIGHTH STORY

BIONDELLO plays Ciacco a trick which the latter adroitly returns, by having him soundly beaten.

EVERY member of the gay brigade swore that what Talano had beheld in his sleep was no dream but sheer clairvoyance, so scrupulously had it been verified in all its details. When all were silent, however, the queen requested Lauretta to resume the story-telling, who began:

Wisest of ladies, just as everyone who has spoken before me to-day has been inspired by something already told, so too am I. In this case, it's the cruel vengeance of the scholar which Pampinea told us about yesterday that moves me to tell you of another which was certainly unpleasant for the victim, though not half so ruthless as Rinieri's.

Once upon a time, there lived in Florence a man whom everyone commonly knew as Ciacco, the greatest glutton and guzzler that ever was, though otherwise a courteous gentleman and a wit. As his circumstances were not sufficient for him to meet the expenses his extravagant tastes incurred, he gave himself wholly to the calling, not altogether of a court-jester, but of a hanger-on in the society of rich folk who furnished and enjoyed a good table. Day and night he might be seen in their company, at dinner and at supper as the case might be, although he had not always been invited.

At that time, there also lived in Florence a man called Biondello. He was a wee little fellow, spry as a fly and trimmer than a pin, with a cap upon his head and flowing yellow locks, not a hair of which was out of curl. He too followed the same profession as Ciacco.

One Lenten morning, while Biondello had gone to the fishmarket to buy a pair of handsome lam-

preys for Master Vieri de' Cerchi, he met Ciacco, who approached him, saying, "What's all this?"

Biondello said, "Oh, last night Master Corso Donati was sent three lampreys much finer than these, and a sturgeon besides, but as they were not enough for the entertainment of certain gentlemen, his guests, he had me buy these other two. Aren't you going to be at the dinner?"

"Of course you know I'll be there," said Ciacco.

When he thought it time for him to visit Master Corso, he started for the gentleman's house and found him with a party of neighbors. Dinner had not yet been served.

"What brings you to these parts, Ciacco?" asked Master Corso.

"I've come to dine with you and your guests, sir," he said.

"You're welcome," said Master Corso, "and since it's time, let's go to dinner."

Accordingly, they took their places at table. First of all, they had chick-peas and salted tunny. The next course was fried fish from the Arno, and then there was nothing more.

Ciacco was soon aware that Biondello had played him a trick. He was not a little angered, though he did not show it, and swore to make him pay for it.

Not many days had passed, before he again encountered Biondello, who had already made many a man laugh at his prank. "Good day to you," Biondello greeted him with a laugh, "and how did you enjoy Master Corso's lampreys?"

"Before the week is past you'll know much better than I," replied Ciacco.

Taking leave of Biondello, he lost no time in seeking out a certain crafty porter, with whom he came to terms. Giving him a large glass flagon, he took him to the arcade of the Cavicciuoli, pointed out to him a gentleman called Filippo Argenti, a strapping, burly, sinewy hulk of a man, as scornful, irascible and eccentric as could be, and said, "You go up to that man with this bottle in your hand and say to him, 'Sir, Biondello sends me to you, and begs me to ask you to please encarnadine this flask with your good red wine, as he wants to have a little pleasure with his pets.' Be careful he doesn't get hold of you, or he'll make you remember it and you'll be ruining my plans."

"Is there anything else I have to say?" inquired the porter.

"No," said Ciacco. "Go now, and after you've said what I told you, come back here to me with the bottle and I'll pay you."

The porter went in and did as he was told. Now Filippo was no great wit, and believing that Biondello, whom he knew, was playing a joke on him, he turned crimson with rage.

"What *encarnadine* and what *pets* are you talking about?" he roared. "The devil take you and him together!"

Jumping up, he tried to seize the porter. The fellow, however, had been on his guard, and making off in double quick time, he rejoined Ciacco by another route. Then to him, who had seen everything, he reported what Filippo had said. Ciacco was satisfied and paid the porter for his trouble, but from then on, he had no rest until he again met Biondello, to whom he said, "Have you been going to the Cavicciuoli arcade these days?"

"Why, no," said Biondello. "Why do you ask?"

"Because Master Filippo has been looking for you, I don't know why," replied Ciacco.

"That's fine," said the other. "I'm passing that way now, and I'll speak to him."

Thereupon he went his way, with Ciacco following close behind to see how the matter would turn out.

Now when Filippo had failed to catch the porter, he had been maddened by a rage that still gnawed within him, all the more because he had not been able to make head or tail of the message, except that perhaps Biondello, at some man's instigation, was having a joke at his expense. He was still seething with fury, when along came Biondello, whom he no sooner saw than he pounced upon him with a resounding cuff.

"Mercy, sir!" cried Biondello. "What does this mean?"

But Filippo seized him by his yellow hair, ripped off his cap, and flinging it on the ground, thundered to the accompaniment of great blows, "You scoundrel! What does this mean, you say? You'll find out soon enough! *Encarnadine* and *pets* indeed! What's all this nonsense that you put people up to tell me? Do you take me for a child, that can be fooled?"

So saying, he fell on the poor wretch with his fists, that were like iron, bashed in his face, and left no hair on his head that was not at odds with the other. Then he rolled him in the mud, ripping his clothes off his back, and all in such a rage that Biondello could not put in a word, or ask him why he was treating him that way. True, he had heard Filippo say something about *encarnadine* and *pets*, but he had no idea in the world what he meant by the words.

Finally, after Filippo had pummeled him soundly, the people who by this time had collected about them in great number managed, with great difficulty, to deliver the poor wretch from his assailant, ruffled and disordered as he was, and told him why he had been served in that fashion.

"You ought to know him, by this time," they said. "He's not the kind of man to be trifled with, and you had no business to send him such messages."

Biondello denied everything, moaning and wailing. "I never sent to him for any wine," he protested.

However, after he had somewhat recovered from his misadventure, he returned home, aching and dismayed, firmly convinced that the trick had been of Ciacco's doing.

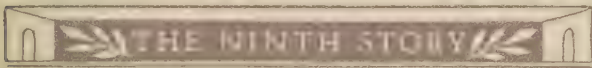
At last, after many days, when the bruises on his face had healed and he took to going out again, Ciacco met him and said with a laugh:

"Ho, there, Biondello! How did you like Filippo's wine?"

"As much as you did Master Corso's lampreys," he answered.

"It's all up to you from now on," said Ciacco. "If you ever treat me again to the sort of dinner you gave me, I'll requite you with the kind of drink you had."

Biondello had to admit that any ill-will he bore Ciacco would always far exceed any actual mischief he could do him, so he patched up the quarrel with him, and from then on took care not to trifle with him.



Two youths go to Solomon for advice—one seeking to know how to gain the love of his fellow-men, and the other how to cure his wife of her perversity. To the first he answered, "Love!" and to the other, "Go to Goose-Bridge!"

THERE was no one else left to speak now but the queen, if Dioneo's privilege were to be observed, and therefore, after the ladies had enjoyed a laugh at the hapless Biondello, she cheerfully began:

Lovable ladies, if we take the trouble to consider with an open mind, the way things are arranged in the world we'll soon discover that women, as a class, are subject to men by the laws of nature, custom, and tradition, and are obliged to govern themselves accordingly. Hence, if a woman is anxious to enjoy peace, comfort and harmony with the men to whom she is related, she must be humble, forbearing and obedient, besides being virtuous—a quality which every discreet woman holds as her chief treasure. Indeed, even if human laws, which first and foremost consider common good, and custom, or tradition, whose power is both far-reaching and praiseworthy—I say, even if these did not teach us the lesson, nature alone makes it manifest. For has she not made us tender and delicate of body, timid and faint of heart? The physical strength she has given us is puny. Furthermore, she has endowed us with soft, gentle voices and easy, harmonious movements—all testifying to our need of man's protection.

Whoever wishes to be protected and taken care of, must necessarily be obedient, submissive and respectful toward his protector. And whom have we to help and protect us if not man? It is to man, therefore, that we owe our submission, which is to him a supreme honor, and any woman who departs from this rule I consider not only worthy of severe blame, but also of rigorous punishment.

I was led to these reflections—though not for the first time, I must confess—by the story Pampinea told a little while ago of Talano's wayward wife, upon whom God visited the punishment her husband had not expected to give her. I maintain, as I said before, that all women who depart from being the pleasant, gentle, compliant creatures that nature, custom and tradition would have them, are each and every one deserving of ruthless and rigorous punishment.

À propos of what I have just said, I'd like to tell you a story about a certain bit of advice Solomon offered as effective medicine for curing women suffering from such ills. Let no one who is in no need

of that sort of cure take it personally, though men have a certain proverb that says, 'Good horse and bad horse with spuryou prick; good wife and bad wife both need the stick.' Interpreted in jest, the words, we must confess, hold a grain of truth. Even if we understood them as a moral precept, we must again admit their verity. Women are naturally giddy and inclined to waywardness, therefore the stick is necessary to punish the wickedness of those who overstep their bounds. Again, to maintain the virtue of the others who do not permit themselves to go astray, the stick is also needful, both to encourage and intimidate them. But enough of my sermon and let's proceed to the story.

The lofty fame of Solomon's marvelous wisdom, as you know, had been spread well-nigh throughout the world, and as he was also renowned for his generosity in offering proofs of it to whoever cared to experience it at first hand, many flocked to him from everywhere for advice in their direst and most pressing needs.

Now among the numbers who came to him on this errand, there was a youth of rank and substance by the name of Melisso, who left Lajazzo, his home and birthplace. Beyond the gates of Antioch, on his way to Jerusalem, he met a young man called Josepho, and as he too was going to the same city, they traveled together a while, striking up a conversation, as travelers usually do. Melisso had already learned from Josepho who he was and where he came from, and accordingly he asked him where he was going, and on what errand.

"I'm on my way to see Solomon," said Josepho, "for advice about my wife," and told him further what a wayward woman she was, more so than anyone else in the world, and so perverse that neither his prayers, cajolings or anything else could move her from her frowardness. "And where do you come from?" he inquired in turn, "and why have you undertaken your journey?"

"I'm of Lajazzo," answered Melisso. "And as you have your affliction, so have I mine. I am rich, and I use my wealth in keeping open-house and honoring my fellow-citizens at table. But it's a strange and very puzzling thing, that for all this, I cannot find a man who loves me. Hence, I am going where you are going, to obtain some word on how I may

succeed in winning the love of my fellow-men."

The two continued together until they arrived in Jerusalem, where an introduction was effected by one of Solomon's knights and they were admitted to his presence. Briefly, Melisso explained his need to the king.

"Love!" Solomon answered him.

The advice uttered, Melisso was ushered out of the audience-chamber as Josepho told the wise-man what had brought him there.

"Go to Goose-Bridge!" Solomon advised him, and said no more. Then similarly, Josepho was ushered out of his presence.

Outside, he rejoined Melisso, who was waiting for him, and informed him of the answer he had received. For a long time the youths pondered over the wise-man's words, but unable to make anything out of them or deduce some benefit for their needs, they set out on their journey homeward, feeling not a little foolish.

They had been traveling a few days when they came upon a stream spanned by a handsome bridge. A long caravan of mules and pack-horses was crossing at the time, so the two were obliged to await their turn, until all the beasts had crossed to the other side. Soon nearly all had filed past, but suddenly one of the mules took fright, a fairly common occurrence with those beasts, and would not go ahead for anything in the world. Seeing how the case stood, the muleteer seized a stick and began giving the beast a moderate dose of it to urge it forward. But the mule, pitching now to one side of the path and now the other, and sometimes even dashing backwards altogether, would not consider going across. The muleteer was at the end of his patience, and fuming with rage lay on mercilessly with the stick, now on the creature's head, now on its flanks and again on its rump. Still it was of no avail.

Melisso and Josepho were witnesses to this beating, and again and again exclaimed to the man, "Stop, wicked lout! What are you doing? Do you want to kill the beast outright? Why don't you try to be kind to it and coax it across? It will obey you more readily than if you thwack it the way you do."

But the muleteer answered, "You know your horses and I know my mule. Leave me to handle it."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when

he fell to beating the beast once again, dealing so lustily right and left, that the mule at last was persuaded to go across and the muleteer came out of the contest victorious.

The two youths were about to resume their journey, when Josepho asked a poor fellow who was sunning himself at the bridge-gate, "Tell me, good man, what bridge is this?"

"Sir, it is called Goose-Bridge," replied the other.

Instantly, the name recalled Solomon's counsel to the youth's mind, and turning to Melisso, he said, "I tell you, friend, after all, the advice Solomon gave me may turn out to be wholesome and true, for I'm now convinced that I didn't know how to beat my wife. This muleteer has certainly taught me what I have to do."

Some days later they came to Antioch, where Josepho invited Melisso to stay with him a day or so, to rest from the fatigue of the journey. It was no joyous welcome the wife gave the guest. Nevertheless, Josepho requested her kindly to prepare a dinner according to Melisso's wish. The latter, seeing it was his friend's desire, told her in a few words what he would have, whereupon the woman, true to her perverse habits, followed none of his instructions but did the contrary, in almost every detail. Josepho grew wroth.

"Weren't you told what sort of meal you were to prepare?" he asked.

She turned upon him insolently. "Indeed!" she said. "What may you be driving at? Come and eat if you wish. Did you tell me to do otherwise? Well, I preferred to do it this way. If you like it, very well. If you don't, leave it."

Melisso was aghast at the woman's impudence, and condemned her. Josepho, on the other hand, simply remarked, "You're still your old self. But, believe me, I'll make you mend your ways." Turning to Melisso, he said, "Friend, we'll soon test the efficacy of Solomon's advice. But please don't be hurt at what you're going to witness. Look upon it as a sort of game. Then, if you should feel moved to stop me, think of the answer the muleteer gave us when we felt sorry for his beast."

"I am in your house," answered Melisso, "and while I am in it, I don't intend to hinder anything you may wish to do."

Thereupon Josepho, providing himself with a good, stout, round stick of young oak, went into the bedroom where the woman had gone grumbling on rising vexed from the table, and clutching her by the braids, flung her down at his feet, putting his cudgel to use. At first the woman began to shriek and then to threaten, but when she saw that nothing could stop Josepho, although she was already bruised all over, she pleaded with him. "Mercy, for God's sake!" she cried. "Don't kill me, and I promise always to do as you say!"

Still Josepho did not desist. Indeed, he continued basting her more zealously than before, overlooking neither ribs, thighs, nor shoulders in his search for every seam. Not until he was compelled by weariness, and there was no bone or inch of flesh left unhurt on his wife's body, did he give up the sport.

The beating administered, he joined Melisso and said, "To-morrow we'll see what fruits the advice about going to Goose-Bridge will bear."

Then, after he had washed his hands and rested a while, he had supper with his friend and in due time went to bed.

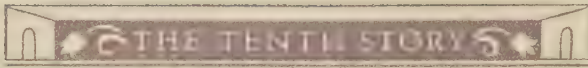
The poor woman, meanwhile, dragged herself with great difficulty to her bed, and snatched what rest she could until the day dawned, when, rising with the lark, she sent to find out what Josepho desired for dinner. He laughed at this, and so did his friend, and he gave his order.

At dinner-time, when they returned to the dining-room, they found everything beautifully prepared, according to their instructions, upon which they highly praised the advice they had once so little understood.

Some days later, Melisso bade his friend goodbye, and returning to his own home confided to some wise-man the advice Solomon had given him.

"He could not have offered you truer or better counsel," said the man. "You know you love nobody. All the honors and favors you heap upon people are prompted not by the love you bear your fellow-men, but by a love of pomp and show. Learn to love, as Solomon told you, and you will be loved."

So, then, was the wayward woman chastened by Solomon's advice, and the youth beloved, by loving.



BROTHER John, at the request of his friend Pietro, performs a charm to transform his wife into a mare; but when the priest is about to attach the mare's tail, Peter says he will have none of it, and so ruins the spell.

THE queen's story evoked murmurs of disapproval from the ladies and laughter from the men, and when all of them had calmed down, Dioneo began:

A black crow among a bevy of fairest doves, charming ladies, does more to enhance their beauty than would a snow-white swan. Similarly, a person of none too lofty intellect among wise-men, not only adds to the radiance and worth of their understanding, but affords amusement and sport. You ladies are all exceedingly wise and modest, therefore I, the black sheep of this party, should be all the more appreciated for enhancing the light of your virtue by my own shortcomings, than if I obscured it by showing greater worth. For this reason, I deserve more latitude to reveal myself as I am, and you must bear with me more patiently in what I say or do, than if I had sounder wits in my head. Well, then, I'm going to tell you a fairly short story, from which you will gather how necessary it is to observe all the rules laid down by those who perform wonders by means of magic charms, and how easy it can be to ruin the good work by sinning in the least detail.

About a year ago, a priest called Brother John of Barolo came to Barletta. He had a miserable little parish at best, and so to keep body and soul together, he took to peddling goods by going about the fairs at Apulia with a mare of his, engaging in a small way in buying and selling. As he pursued this calling, he became quite friendly with a goodman by the name of Pietro di Tresanti, who carried on the same business with the help of his ass, and like the good Apulian that he was, he called him Friend Pietro as a token of love and fellowship. Indeed, whenever he stopped at his parish in Barletta, he would always take him to his house and put him up for the night in his own room, showing him all the courtesy his small means could afford. Friend Pietro, on his part, returned the compliment. Although he was as poor as a churchmouse, and only had a

wretched little hut at Tresanti scarcely big enough to hold him, his young and comely wife and his ass, he would always take the priest home with him, whenever the holy man chanced to pass that way, and there he feasted and entertained him as best he could, out of gratitude for the hospitality he received from him at Barletta. However, it was always difficult for Friend Pietro to put up the priest as he would have wished. The house contained but one little bed, in which Friend Pietro slept with his luscious wife, hence he was obliged to house Brother John's mare with the donkey in a wee stable, and there the good priest had to share with his beast the mound of hay that was their pallet.

More than once, during the priest's visits, Friend Pietro's wife, knowing the courtesy the holy man showed him at Barletta, suggested sleeping with a neighbor by the name of Zita Carapresa, the daughter of Giudice Leo, so that Brother John might share the bed with her husband. She had made the proposal again and again, but he would never agree to it.

"Don't worry your head about me, Gemmata, my dear," he said on one occasion, "I'm perfectly well-satisfied with things as they are, for whenever the whim takes me, I change this mare into a jolly lass and lie with her. Then, at my wish, I change her to a mare again. I wouldn't part with her for anything."

The young woman believed him and gaped with amazement. Presently, she communicated the wonder to her goodman, adding, "If he's such a friend of yours as you say, why don't you ask him to teach you that charm? Then you could change me to a mare and carry on your business with both a donkey and me. We'd be earning twice as much together, and when we got home you could turn me back to my womanly shape."

Friend Pietro had no great wit in his noddle. He lent a credulous ear to what Gemmata said and concurred with her plan, plaguing Brother John to teach him this wonderful charm. The good priest did his utmost to drive this nonsense out of the fellow's cranium, but since he could not, "Well," he said, "as you insist, to-morrow we'll get up before dawn, as usual, and I'll show you how the trick is done. I must confess, though, it is a mighty hard thing to attach the tail, as you'll see for yourself."

All night long, Friend Pietro and goodwife Gemmata scarcely slept a wink, so impatient were they for the deed to be done. With the first peep of dawn they rose and called Brother John, who came in his nightshirt to his friend's bedroom, saying, "There's no other man alive for whom I would do this, and as you insist, I'll go ahead with it. But I must stress one point. If you want the charm to succeed, you must do exactly as I say."

Both the goodman and his wife nodded assent, whereupon Brother John, taking a light and thrusting it into Friend Pietro's hand, counseled him, "Watch closely what I am going to do and try to remember all I say. But first and foremost, be careful you don't let out a single word, no matter what you hear or see, or the whole thing will be ruined. Only pray to God that the tail will be well stuck."

Friend Pietro held the lamp tight. "I'll be careful to do as you say," he promised.

Then Brother John, turning to Gemmata, had her strip to the skin and crouch on all fours, like a mare. "Beware, and don't utter a word, no matter what happens," he cautioned her likewise.

So saying, he began passing his hands over her face and head, mumbling, "Let this be a fine mare's head." Sliding his fingers through her hair, "Let this be a fine mare's mane," he said, and feeling her arms, added, "and these a fine mare's sturdy legs and pretty feet." When he felt of her breasts and found them firm and round, a certain one awoke who had not been summoned, and popped right up. "Let this be a fine mare's chest," continued Brother John, and kept up the incantation until he had gone over her back and belly, buttocks, thighs and legs. At last, when nothing further remained for him to do but to attach the tail, he raised his shirt and taking the peg with which he planted men, slipped it nimbly into the hole already made for it, saying, "And let this be a fine mare's tail."

Friend Pietro had so far watched everything with the closest attention, but this last twist did not seem quite right to his eyes. "Ho, there, Brother John," he cried suddenly, "I don't want any tail there! I won't have it there!"

Just then, that primal moisture had come, by whose aid all plants sprout, whereupon Brother John, withdrawing his dibber, exclaimed, "Good

heavens, Friend Pietro! What have you done? Didn't I warn you not to breathe a word, no matter what you saw? The mare was almost finished, and you had to ruin everything by crying out! The worst of it is, there's no way of working the spell again as long as we live!"

"So much the better then," said Friend Pietro. "I didn't want that tail there, no, not I. Why didn't you say to me, 'Stick it on yourself?' Moreover, you were putting it on too far down."

"I didn't ask you to attach it, because you wouldn't have done such a good job of it as I, myself, the first time," said Brother John.

Meanwhile, Gemmata rose to her feet, and hearing their words turned to her husband in all seriousness, saying, "You blockhead! Why did you have to ruin your chances and mine? Where did you ever see a mare without a tail? Faith, you're a starving wretch, but it would serve you right if you were even poorer than you are!"

Convinced that she could no longer be turned to a mare because of the disenchanting words her husband had uttered, Gemmata donned her clothes again, vexed and disconsolate, while Friend Pietro set out for the Bitonto fair with his donkey, to pursue his usual calling, accompanied by Brother John, whom he never again importuned for such a task.

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The laughter evoked by Dioneo's story, which the ladies had understood better than he had intended, let her imagine, who is laughing at it this very moment.

Now that the stories for the day had been told and the sun was beginning to wane in strength, the queen, knowing that the end of her rule had come, stood up and, taking the laurel-crown from her head, laid it on Pamfilo, who was the only one left to receive the honor.

"My lord," she said, smiling, "you, as the last one to hold the honor that devolves upon you, assume an added burden with it, for it is up to you to remedy my shortcomings and those of the queens and kings who wore the crown before you. But the Lord give you grace, as He has granted it to me to crown you king."

Pamfilo accepted the honor gracefully and said, "Your excellent qualities and the merits of the rest of

my subjects will, I trust, make it possible for me to be adjudged as worthy a monarch as the others were before me."

Following the custom of his predecessors, he arranged with the steward all that was necessary to their general comfort, and turning to the women waiting for him to address them, began:

"Dear ladies, it was the wish of Emilia, our recent queen, to give you freedom to treat whatever subject you desired, that you might relax your powers. Now that we are all rested, I think it advisable for us all to return to our usual procedure. Hence, for to-morrow, I'd like you to be ready with a story on the theme of *such as have distinguished themselves in the accomplishment of generous or magnificent deeds, in love or other fields*. I am sure the stories themselves and the deeds described will inspire your minds to noble endeavor; and so our life, which can have but too brief a span in its mortal husk, will endure immortal in glory—a consummation which all who do not live to serve the belly alone, like mere beasts, should not only desire, but strive earnestly to achieve."

The theme was agreeable to the whole company. One and all, they rose to their feet by the new king's leave, and betaking themselves each and severally to the amusement that most delighted them, they played and romped until supper-time, when they gathered cheerfully at table and were served with order and diligence. Afterwards they danced, as usual, and sang perhaps a thousand ditties, all more humorous of content than excellent of music. At last the king, turning to Neifile, said, "Sing us a ballad in your own name, I pray you."

Without waiting to be coaxed, she graciously began in a clear, joyous voice:

"I am in girlhood bloom and with glad heart
I joy and carol in the budded spring,
All thanks to love and its vagaries sweet.

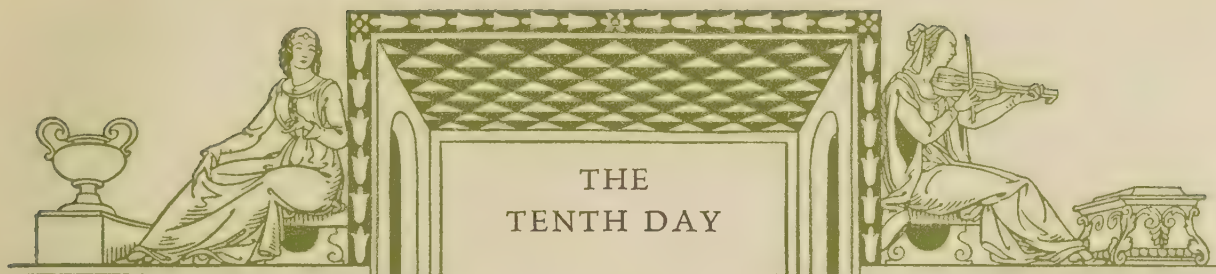
In meadows green I seek the multitude
Of flowers white and gold and crimson dight,
The roses crowning thorns, and lilies white—
In each of them I find similitude
Of my beloved's face, all am'rous-hued.
He holds me fast, and as his treasured thing
All my desires turn his love to meet.

When 'mid the blooms I find a flower that vies
To my own seeming, with my lover dear,
I cull and kiss it, and I bid it bear
The burden of my soul, confessor-wise,
And of my heart bespeak the yearning sighs.
Then on my hair with flowers blossoming,
I interweave it in a garland meet.

Beyond the pleasure and ah, far above
A flower grants the sight, one more is mine—
To find within its core the youth divine
Who has inflamed me with his gentle love.
But ah! the raptures that my senses prove
From the sweet scents that from its petals
spring,
Only my sighs could witness or repeat!

For all my sighs come not from out my breast
Harshly nor doleful, as when others sigh,
But warm they rise, and soft, and gently fly
Toward my beloved, who, when thus addressed
Moves of himself to grant my own love's quest.
And still he comes, the sweet delight to bring,
When 'Come, or I shall languish,' I entreat."

The king and the ladies praised Neifile's song lavishly. A good part of the night had sped, however, so shortly after this last ballad, the king dismissed his little company to rest until the following morning.



A GROUP of little clouds was still rosy in the west, while in the east others were edged with the brightest gold by the sun's rays, when Pamfilo, arising, summoned all the ladies and his companions to him.

When they were assembled, he consulted with them about where they might go for their amusement, and with slow steps he led the party, accompanied by Filomena and Fiammetta. They discussed many things about their future life together, making suggestions, asking and answering questions, and for a long time they took their recreation.

Meanwhile, during their long walk, the sun's rays had begun to beat down upon them with burning heat, so they retraced their steps to the palace. The cups were rinsed at the clear fountain, and those who were thirsty, drank; then, in the grateful shade of the garden, they disported themselves until dinner-time. A nap followed the meal, according to their custom, and later, all refreshed, they gathered again at the place the king designated. He called upon Neifile to tell the first story, and sweetly she began:

THE FIRST STORY

A KNIGHT in the service of the King of Spain thinks himself ill-rewarded for his pains, whereupon the king gives him certain proof that Fortune, and not he, is to blame, and rewards him with royal munificence.

I THOUGHT to consider myself greatly complimented, noble ladies, that our king has favored me so greatly by asking me to begin upon the theme of generosity, which as much constitutes the light and brilliance of every other quality as the sun is the glory and ornament of heaven. I'll tell a little story *à propos* of it, a very nice little story, I think, which it certainly would do you no harm to remember.

Well then, you must know that of all the valiant knights our city has ever produced, perhaps the most remarkable was Messer Ruggieri de' Figiovanini, a wealthy and high-spirited man, who, seeing that the life and customs of Tuscany afforded him little or no opportunity to show his prowess to the best advantage, resolved to stay a while at the court of Alfonso, King of Spain, whose reputation for valor far transcended that of any contemporary ruler. Furnishing himself with arms, horses and soldiers as became his honorable rank, he betook himself to Spain, where the king graciously received him.

Messer Ruggieri settled there, living in splendor, and performing such marvelous feats of arms that he was soon renowned as a man of prowess. When he had been living in Spain a considerable time, keeping close watch over the king's behaviour, it seemed to him that the monarch was overly imprudent in bestowing his castles, towns and feudal titles indiscriminately, on people who did not deserve them. Nothing, on the other hand, was ever given to him. Now he knew his own worth, and thinking his renown would suffer in consequence of the king's neglect he decided to leave and asked the monarch's permission. The king granted it, and gave him besides one of the best and most beautiful mules that had ever been mounted. Messer Ruggieri gladly accepted it, especially when he considered the long journey that was ahead of him.

This accomplished, Alfonso charged one of his trustworthy servants to contrive as best he could to ride with Messer Ruggieri, but in such a way as not to appear in league with himself, and to listen to everything Messer Ruggieri said of him, so as to be able to carry it back, and then, the morning after, he was to order the knight to present himself before him at court.

The servant stood watch, and as soon as Messer

Ruggieri left the country, he shrewdly contrived to join him, pretending that he too was on his way to Italy. As they traveled pleasantly together, talking of one thing and another, Messer Ruggieri, who was riding the mule the king had given him, said toward nightfall:

"Perhaps it might be wise to give our beasts a rest," and entering a stable, all the animals were relieved, except the mule, which would not rest. As they rode on, and the squire kept his ears pricked to catch everything the knight said, they came to a stream where they stopped to water their beasts. Immediately, the mule balked.

"May the devil take you, beast!" cried Messer Ruggieri. "You're just like your master who gave you to me."

The king's servant buried these words in his memory as well as many others he had gathered as they traveled all day long, but not another did he hear him utter, that was not in the highest degree flattering to the king.

The following day, when they had mounted their horses and Messer Ruggieri was about to pursue his way to Tuscany, the squire made the king's command known and the knight turned back at once.

The king was already informed of what Ruggieri had said about the mule, and sending for him, received him with a smiling face.

"Why did you liken me to my mule," he asked, "or rather, why did you liken her to me?"

"My lord," replied Messer Ruggieri with candor, "I likened her to you simply because you bestow your gifts where they are not deserved and give nothing where gifts are due, just as your mule refused to rest where she should have, and balked where she shouldn't."

"Well, Ruggieri," said the king, "if I did not reward you as I did others, who are of no account compared to you, it was not because I failed to appreciate your worth as a most courageous, highly deserving knight. It was your own luck that wouldn't permit me, and I'll give you sufficient proof that I am right."

"My lord," replied Messer Ruggieri, "it was not because I desired greater riches that I was troubled when I received no reward from you, but simply because you did not immediately testify to my merit.

Anyhow, I accept your excuse as valid and honest, and I am ready to see whatever you please to show me, though I believe you, even without that."

The king then led him to a vast hall, where, as he had arranged beforehand, they were confronted by two massive sealed chests. There, in the presence of many courtiers, he said, "Ruggieri, one of these chests contains my crown, the royal scepter and the sphere, and many handsome girdles, brooches, rings and precious gems belonging to me. The other is full of earth. Choose one, and whichever it is you select, accept. Thus you'll be able to judge who has been unappreciative of your merit—I or Fortune."

Ruggieri saw that it was the king's pleasure and selected one of the chests, which the king commanded to be opened. It was the one that was full of earth.

"You can see for yourself, Ruggieri," said the king, laughing, "that I was right in what I said about luck. But your deserts merit my opposition to its power. I know you have no desire to become a Spaniard, therefore I shall give you neither castle nor town, but the very chest of which your luck deprived you. In spite of its decree, I want that chest to be yours to take with you to your own land, that you may glory in your merits among your neighbors, through the testimony of my gifts."

Messer Ruggieri accepted the chest, and thanking the king as befitted him for so splendid a gift, he went back to Tuscany with it, eminently satisfied.

THE SECOND STORY

GHINO da Tacco captures the Abbot of Cluny, cures him of stomach-trouble and then lets him go. Back at the court of Rome, the abbot reconciles Ghino to Pope Boniface who makes him a Prior of the Hospitalers.

THE munificence of King Alfonso to the Florentine knight was duly appreciated and succeeded in pleasing Pamfilo tremendously. Turning to Elisa, he asked her to continue, and very readily she began:

Exquisite ladies, no one can deny that it is a fine and laudable thing for a king to be munificent and bestow his generosity upon a man who had served him. But what shall we say when we hear of a prelate who was admirably magnanimous to one he

would have been justified in treating as an enemy? Surely, that the king's deed was virtue and the prelate's a pure and simple miracle, for it is well-known that churchmen are even stingier than women, and the sworn enemies of generosity in every manner, shape or form. It is true that everybody naturally hungers after vengeance for insults suffered; but holy men, as we can see for ourselves, in spite of their vaunted patience, and above all, their much extolled virtue of forgiveness, seek it even more hotly than other mortals. But now you will have manifest proof, from the story I am about to tell you, just how generous a prelate could be.

Ghino da Tacco, notorious for his cruelties and daring robberies, was banished from Siena. As he was at odds with the Counts of Santa Fiore, he incited Radicofani to rebel against the church of Rome, and settled there to live, setting his marauders to rob any man bold enough to pass that way.

At that time, while Boniface the Eighth was pontiff at Rome, the Abbot of Cluny, believed to be one of the wealthiest prelates of the church, came to his court, and there, falling sick of stomach-trouble, was advised by the doctors to take the baths at Siena in order to be cured. The pope readily gave him leave to go, and so, without being at all concerned about Ghino's notoriety, the abbot set out with pomp and ceremony to Siena, taking horses and retainers without number.

Ghino da Tacco was soon apprised of his coming. Accordingly, he spread his nets, and without letting even a single page-boy slip through, he hedged the abbot, his followers and all his appurtenances into a narrow enclosure. This accomplished, he commissioned one of his most capable men to go with an honorable escort to the abbot and courteously request him, in his name, to come and stay at his castle. The abbot raged at the invitation. "I'll do nothing of the kind!" he cried. "What have I to do with this Ghino? I'll go right ahead, and I'd like to see the man who dares to stop me!"

Humbly, the emissary spoke again, "Your worship, you find yourself in a part of the world where we have no fear baiting the Lord's might. Here interdicts and excommunications are themselves excommunicated, therefore be so good as to favor Ghino by accepting."

In the course of the conversation, the whole place had been surrounded by Ghino's men, and the abbot suddenly found that he and his followers had been taken prisoners. There was nothing for him to do but to go to the castle, though much against his will, and away he went, escorted by the emissary and followed by his men and his trappings. In the court he dismounted, but at Ghino's command he was confined alone in a dark, uncomfortable hole of a room in one of the galleries, while the rest of the men were most handsomely lodged in various quarters of the castle, each according to his rank. Not a hand was laid on the horses and provisions, which were all placed in safety.

This accomplished, Ghino himself went to the abbot.

"Your worship," he said, "Ghino, whose guest you are, charges you in all courtesy to tell him where you were going, and on what business."

The abbot, a wise man, knowing how to make pride bow before necessity, told him where he was going and why. Ghino then took leave of him and made up his mind to cure him without the help of any baths. Ordering a large, cheerful fire to be kept burning in the abbot's room, and setting a watch outside the door to guard it well, he went away and did not return until morning, when he brought him two slices of toast on a snow-white napkin, and a tumblerful of the abbot's own Corniglia vintage.

"Your worship," he said, "when Ghino was a young man he took up the study of medicine, and he learned there was no better treatment for stomach-complaints than the one he intends to apply to your case. These things I bring you are only the beginning of the cure, so take them, sir, and be of good cheer."

The abbot, who was more anxious for food than jests, ate the toast, though he swallowed his indignation with it, and drank the wine, and then gave vent to his indignation in arrogant speeches, demanding information, dispensing advice, and finally ending with a request to see Ghino. Patiently, Ghino listened to his torrent of speech, turning a deaf ear to some of it, answering the rest in all politeness, and assuring him that Ghino would come to see him as soon as he was able. So saying, he left the abbot and did not make his appearance until the

following day, when again he brought two slices of toast and another glass of wine. This treatment he continued for a number of days, until he discovered that the abbot had eaten some dry beans, which he had secretly and ingeniously brought there for the purpose.

"Your worship," he said, on making this discovery, "Ghino would be pleased to know how your stomach feels."

"I'd feel excellently well if I were out of his hands," replied the abbot. "Besides that I'd like nothing so much as a good dinner—so well has his treatment cured me."

Accordingly, Ghino had a handsome room fitted out for the abbot by his own retainers and decked with his own furnishings, and then prepared a splendid banquet, to which he invited many notables of the town and the abbot's whole following. Next morning he went to his guest.

"Your worship," he said, "since you feel well again, it is time you were out of the hospital."

Taking him courteously by the hand, he led him into the room arranged for him, and there he left him in the midst of his retainers, while he himself went his way to see that the banquet should not be lacking in magnificence.

Meanwhile, the abbot chatted with his men and described his vicissitudes. They attested to quite the contrary concerning the treatment they had enjoyed, saying they had been shown all the courtesies of hospitality by Ghino. Dinner-hour came, however, and they betook themselves to the tables where they were courteously regaled with great store of delicacies and rare wines, Ghino all the while keeping his identity from the abbot. At last, after the prelate had been entertained in this fashion for a number of days, Ghino had all his provisions brought into one large room and his horses, down to the meanest nag, collected in a court directly beneath the windows, and presented himself before him.

"How does your worship feel?" he asked. "Are you strong enough to ride?"

"Indeed I am," said the abbot, "and I'm cured of my stomach-trouble. I assure you I'd feel excellently well if I were out of Ghino's clutches."

Ghino escorted him into the hall where all his provisions and his attendants were collected, and

leading him to a window whence he could look down on all his horses, "Sir Abbot," he said, "you must know that no innate evil, but the fact that I was a gentleman, banished from my home, and impoverished, and that I had so many powerful enemies, brought me, Ghino da Tacco, to be a highway-robber for the defense of life and honor, and to become estranged from the court of Rome. You seem to me a brave gentleman, therefore, now that I have cured you of your stomach-complaint, I have no intention of dealing with you as with any other man in your place, from whom, under like circumstances, I should help myself to as many of his possessions as I pleased. On the contrary, I propose to let you give me whatever you choose, of your own free will, considering my need. All your goods are before you. From this window you can see all your horses gathered in the court. Take part of your belongings, or all of them, as you wish, and henceforth go or stay according to your will."

The abbot wondered greatly that a highway-robber should speak with such generosity of spirit. He was so gratified, that he immediately forgot his wrath and spite. Indeed, his former feelings were converted to one of benevolence and, his heart filled with friendship, he ran to embrace Ghino, saying:

"I swear to the Lord that I'd gladly receive greater injuries than those I thought to be suffering at your hands, to gain the friendship of a man such as I deem you to be. May Fortune be cursed for compelling you to pursue such a wicked calling!"

A little later he set out for Rome, taking with him only a few horses and such provisions as were necessary for the journey, leaving everything else to Ghino.

Meanwhile, in Rome the pope had heard of the abbot's capture, which had caused him no little alarm. Nevertheless, when he saw him, "How did you find the baths?" he asked in jest.

"Holy Father," replied the abbot, smiling, "I found an excellent physician closer at hand than the baths, who cured me perfectly."

He told him the whole story, to the pope's amusement, whereupon the abbot, continuing his speech and moved by a generous impulse, said, "Holy Father, I have a favor to ask of you."

The pope, thinking it concerned quite another matter, freely offered to do whatever he might ask.

"Holy Father, the boon I would ask of you, is that you take my doctor Ghino da Tacco once more into your favor, for of all noble and worshipful men he is certainly of the best. Whatever the mischief he's done, I think Fortune is much more to be blamed than he. I have not the least doubt that if you change it, by granting him some benefice, by means of which he might live in a way more befitting his station, in a little while you too will esteem him as much as I do."

The pope was a generous man, and an admirer of worthy people. On hearing what the abbot had to say, he replied he would gladly grant him his wish, if Ghino were indeed as worthy as he described. "Let him come here with all confidence," he said.

At the abbot's invitation and assurance, Ghino accordingly came to the papal court, where he was not long the pope's attendant, for the pontiff, discovering him to be a truly admirable man, took him once more into his favor and gave him a grand priory of the Hospitalers, after having knighted him to the order. Ghino enjoyed this office to the end of his days, establishing himself as a friend and servant of Holy Church and the Abbot of Cluny.



MITHRIDANES, envying Nathan his reputation for courtesy and generosity, sets out to kill him. Unknown to him, he meets Nathan, to whom he reveals his intention. Nathan then tells him how to accomplish his end, and goes to a wood to meet his murderer. Mithridanes recognizes him, and ashamed of his fault, becomes his friend.

THEY all thought it well-nigh miraculous that a prelate should have done anything out of so generous a spirit, and when the ladies had ceased commenting on the wonder, the king called upon Filostrato to continue.

Noble ladies, he began without delay, the generosity of the King of Spain was great, but the abbot's almost unheard of. Still, I think you will find it no less wonderful to learn how a man sought to show his great-heartedness to another, who desired nothing less than his blood and the very breath of his life, by planning secretly to let him have his wish. Indeed, he would have willingly surrendered his life, had the other still wished to take it, as I intend to show you by a short story of mine.

It is definitely known, if we can believe the reports of certain Genoese sailors and other travelers who have been in those parts, that in the region of Cattajo there once lived a man of noble lineage, who was rich beyond compare. His name was Nathan. He owned a tract of land close to a public road which was necessarily traveled by all wayfarers going from east to west and vice-versa, and as he was great and magnanimous by nature, and anxious to reveal these facts by good works, he called together a multitude of builders and craftsmen, and in a very short time had erected on the spot one of the vastest, richest and handsomest palaces that had ever been seen, furnished with everything necessary to welcome and accommodate guests in the best style. Moreover, he had a numerous retinue of skilled servants, and thus he kept open-house and offered cheerful hospitality to all who came and went, pursuing this noble custom until not only the East but also the West resounded with his goodness.

He was already great in years, though not at all weary of dispensing largesse, when his fame reached the ears of a young man called Mithridanes, of a province not far from his own. The youth realized that he himself possessed no less wealth than the renowned Nathan, and, overcome by envy of his fame and goodness, determined in his heart either to darken or entirely obliterate his rival's virtues, by a show of even greater liberality on his own account. Putting his intention into effect, he had a magnificent palace built, a peer of Nathan's, and plunged into the most extravagant prodigality towards all those who came and went his way, until in a short time everyone knew of his fame.

One day, while the youth was seeking solitude in the atrium of his palace, a little old woman came through one of the gates, begging for alms. He gave her what she sought. Then she came through the second gate, besought him once more, and again received what she asked, continuing through all the gates, one after the other, until she had begged twelve times in succession. When she returned for the thirteenth time, Mithridanes said to her, "My good woman, you're certainly most assiduous in this begging of yours." Nevertheless, he gave her alms this time as well, but at his words the old woman cried, "Ah, Nathan's generosity, how wonderful

you are! Through the thirty-two gates his palace possesses, like this one, I came to him, asking for alms. Not once did he show he knew me, and each and every time I was rewarded. How different from this place! Here I've only come through thirteen gates and I've been discovered, and lectured, too!" And so she went away and never showed her face there again.

Mithridanes blazed into a fury at the old woman's words, construing the praise of Nathan's fame as belittling his own. "Ah, miserable me!" he groaned. "When shall I ever attain to the generosity of Nathan in his great deeds, not to speak of surpassing it, as I struggle to do, when even in the meanest of his actions I cannot approach him? Truly, all my efforts will be wasted if I don't remove him from the earth. If old age doesn't carry him off, then I'll have to do it with my own hands, and that, soon."

Rising impulsively to his feet, he mounted his horse, followed by a small retinue, and without revealing his purpose to a living being, he set out for Nathan's country. Three days later, toward evening, he had arrived there. Commanding his companions to pretend they were not of his party, indeed, that they did not know him, and advising them to seek lodgings until further notice, he went off by himself to a place not far from the great man's palace, where he met Nathan taking a walk for his pleasure, without escort of pomp or raiment. The youth did not know him, and therefore asked him if he could direct him to Nathan's house.

Graciously, the venerable man answered, "My son, there is no one here who could show you it better than I, so whenever you're ready, I'll be glad to lead you there."

"I shall be very much obliged to you, sir," said Mithridanes, "but if you can manage it, try not to let Nathan see me or know me."

"I'll also do that for you, since you desire it," replied Nathan.

Alighting from his horse, Mithridanes walked toward the splendid palace, led by Nathan, who engaged him in edifying conversation before very long. At the palace, he had one of his servants take care of the youth's horse. "Tell everyone of the household not to reveal to this young gentleman that I am Nathan," he whispered in the man's ear; and his

wish was respected. Then he assigned to his guest a handsome suite, where nobody came to intrude upon him but the attendants he had deputed to his service, and treated him royally, he himself often coming to keep him company.

Mithridanes lived thus with him a while, and though he revered the old man as a father, one day he could not help saying, "Who are you?"

"I?" replied Nathan. "I am a humble servant of Nathan's, grown old and hoary with him since my boyhood. Never has he raised me a step from the position in which you find me, so that even though the rest of the world may be well content with him, I have little cause to be grateful."

These few words inspired Mithridanes with greater hope of achieving his wicked purpose more safely and surely. Accordingly, when Nathan courteously asked him who he was and what had brought him to those parts, offering aid and counsel in everything that lay within his power, the youth at first hesitated, and then, exacting his promise of secrecy, revealed his intention after long circumlocution, and asked his help and advice about putting it into effect.

Nathan was shocked to his heart's core on hearing Mithridanes' fatal purpose, but without much hesitation, he answered with untroubled face and courageous mind, "Mithridanes, your father was a noble man, and you have shown that you do not care to depart from his virtue, by embarking upon your lofty enterprise of becoming a model of generosity. I can find it in me to admire the envy you feel of Nathan's worth, for if there were many more like you, this most miserable world would soon become a heaven. You may rest assured that I shall keep the purpose you revealed to me a strict secret. As for your execution of it, I am afraid I can more easily offer you advice than help. Look, from here you can see a certain little grove, about half a mile away, where almost daily Nathan goes walking for his pleasure, for quite a time at a stretch. There you will have no trouble finding him and carrying out your desire. Now if you kill him, don't go back by the path you took going there, if you want to return home safe, but follow another which you will see leading out of the wood on the left-hand side. True, it is a little wilder than the first, but it's nearer your house, and safer for you."

As soon as Mithridanes had received these instructions and Nathan had gone, he secretly informed his followers, who were also living in the palace, to wait for him at a certain place the following morning. Day dawned; Nathan's spirit had not swerved in the least from the counsel he had given Mithridanes. At the customary hour of his walk, therefore, he set out resolutely for the grove to meet his death.

Mithridanes also rose, took his bow and sword, as he had no other weapons, and rode toward the wood. From a distance, he spied his victim walking alone. Before falling upon him, the youth resolved first to meet him face to face and hear him speak. Accordingly, he rode toward him, and seizing him by the turban about his head, cried, "Old man, your end has come!"

Nathan offered no resistance, but said simply, "Then I must have deserved it."

On hearing the man's voice, and peering into his face, Mithridanes recognized him at once as the man who had so affectionately received him, so intimately befriended him, and so faithfully advised him. Immediately, his fury vanished and gave way to a feeling of shame. Flinging away the sword he had unsheathed to strike him, he leaped down from his horse and cast himself weeping at the old man's feet.

"Dearest father," he said, "now I know how truly great is your generosity, when I see what precautions you took to come here secretly, and surrender to me the life which, for no reason at all, I thirsted for, even in your presence! But God, more careful of my duty than I myself, in the hour when I needed to see most clearly, opened the eyes of my understanding, which unworthy envy had sealed. Thus, O father, the more unselfishly ready you were to comply with my evil wish, the more I recognize what need I have to repent of my crime. Take, then, oh, take whatever vengeance you deem sufficient to expiate my sin!"

Nathan lifted the youth to his feet and tenderly kissed and embraced him. "My son," he said, "there is no need at all for you to ask forgiveness, or for me to forgive you for your intent, or whatever you wish to call it, good or ill, for it was not hate that spurred you on to follow it, but a desire to be considered the

better man. Live, and have no fear of me, for be confident that there is no man who loves you as I love you, considering the loftiness of your soul, which inclined not to amassing fortunes, like meaner spirits, but towards spending what you have in largesse. Do not be mortified that you sought to kill me for your renown, nor think that I wonder at it. The mightiest emperors and the greatest kings have extended their realms and so gained vaster glory by employing no other art than that of murder—not of one man, as you would have done, but of infinite numbers—yes, and by burning whole countries and devastating cities. Hence, if to gain fame you had killed only one man, myself, you would have done nothing new or unusual, but only a common, very common thing."

Mithridanes would not consider himself justified in his evil intent. He was all admiration and respect for Nathan's magnanimity of soul in seeking to find an excuse for him, and as he spoke to the old man he could not help saying, "How could you bring yourself to come to your death? How could you have been so great of heart as to advise and show me the way to do it?"

"Ah, Mithridanes," said Nathan, "do not be astonished at my courage or at my telling you how to kill me, for ever since I came into my own rights and devoted myself to the sort of life you have undertaken, not a man ever came to my house whom I did not seek to gratify to the best of my ability, in any wish he expressed. You came here thirsting for my life. I heard you demanding it with my own ears. Immediately, I resolved to grant it to you, that you might not be the only man to go forth from my house without his desire. Then, in order that you might accomplish it, I offered you what advice I thought best-suited to give you my life without your losing yours. Again, I implore you, if you would have my life, take it, and gain your heart's desire. I know of no other way of yielding it more worthily. I have already made the best of it for eighty years, spending it in my pleasure and comfort, and I know that, as is the case of all men and things, it can be left me but a short time longer, according to the laws of nature. Hence I think it far better to bestow it as a gift, as I have always bestowed my boons and treasures, than to cherish it until it is wrested from

me against my will, by nature. It is little enough to give away a hundred years. How much less is it to give the six or eight years that I may still have to spend on earth? Take my life then, I beg you, if it will afford you pleasure, for in the course of it I have never found a man who wanted it. When could I ever find another if you, who require it, do not take it? Again, even if I should chance to come across such another, don't you think I know that the longer I keep it, the less will be its worth? So take it, then, I pray you, before it becomes more paltry still."

Shamed to the very heart, Mithridanes replied, "God forfend I should sever the thread of so precious a life, or that I should even wish to, as I did a little while ago! Ah, rather than take from it a moment of its span, how willingly would I add to it the years of my own!"

Promptly, Nathan replied, "Tell me, if it were really in your power to add years of your life to mine, would you do so? Would you really allow me to do to you, what I've never done to any man alive—to take?"

"Indeed I would," replied Mithridanes instantly.

"Well, then," said Nathan, "you must do as I say. Remain here in my house, in the glory of your youth, and call yourself Nathan, while I go to your palace and be called Mithridanes."

"Ah, my father," replied the youth, "if I knew how to act as wisely and as well as you have always known, and as you are now acting, I would not hesitate an instant to accept your offer. But alas! I know too well that my actions would tarnish Nathan's fame, and therefore, as I have no intention of ruining in another what I cannot remedy in myself, I must refuse."

After having engaged in these and many other courtly conceits of a similar nature, the two, at Nathan's request, returned to the palace, where the youth was shown the highest honors for many days, while Nathan encouraged him in his noble and lofty resolve with all the persuasions of his understanding. At last, when Mithridanes expressed the desire to return to his own country with his followers, Nathan gave him leave to depart.

And so the youth left him, convinced that he could never outdo his host in generosity of heart or hand.

THE FOURTH STORY

MESSER Gentile de' Carisendi, on his return from Modona, delivers his beloved from the tomb where she had been laid for dead. Under his ministrations, she revives and is brought to bed of a boy, and Messer Gentile restores her and the infant to Nicoluccio Caccianimico, her husband.

IT struck them as indeed marvelous that a man should have been generous with his own life's blood, and all declared that beyond a doubt Nathan's magnanimity of soul far surpassed that of the King of Spain and the Abbot of Cluny. After they had exhausted the argument, the king turned his eyes toward Lauretta, indicating his pleasure for her to continue, whereupon she began, without losing time:

Young ladies, beautiful and truly marvelous are the things that have been told to-day, but the subject of generosity and greatness has been so thoroughly treated, that I'm afraid there's little choice left for us who still have to speak, except to resort to matters of love, always a fertile field for the story-teller. Both for this reason and because our youth naturally inclines in that direction, I shall be pleased to tell you of an act of generosity indulged in by a lover. Perhaps, everything considered, it may not seem less important than the examples we've already had, if there's any truth in the saying that treasures are given, enmities forgotten, and life, indeed, honor and glory imperiled a thousand times, for the acquisition of the beloved object.

In Bologna, a famous city in Lombardy, there once lived a young gentleman by the name of Gentile de' Carisendi, renowned both for his virtue and the nobility of his blood. He fell passionately in love with Catalina, a distinguished lady, the wife of a certain Nicoluccio Caccianimico, and as she did not requite his love, in sheer desperation he accepted the post of governor at Modona, to which he had been appointed, and took his departure.

At that time, Nicoluccio was away from home, and the lady, being great with child, had taken up her residence perhaps three miles from the city, in one of her country-homes. Unexpectedly, she fell ill. So deadly was the disease and so violent, that all signs of life were soon spent in her, and she was pro-

nounced dead by the physicians. Now since the women of her family declared that according to her she had not been pregnant long enough for the child to be fully developed, they did not trouble themselves further about her, and placing her just as she was in a vault of the neighboring church, they left her there, after many manifestations of sorrow.

The event was soon made known to Gentile by a friend, and though he had not received the slightest gift of her favor, he was stricken with grief. "Ah, Catalina, you are dead," he mourned, on waking from the shock. "While you lived, I never enjoyed so much as the boon of a glance from your eyes. But now that you cannot deny me, I will take from your sweet mouth one only kiss, even though you are dead!"

Night had already fallen; still Gentile, taking care that his departure should remain secret, mounted his horse and rode away with a single servant for escort, until he came to the church where the lady was buried. Pushing open the door of the vault, he went in quickly and lay down beside her, his face pressed close against hers. Again and again he kissed her, as tears streamed from his eyes. Now it is well known that men's desires, especially lovers', are not content to be gratified with little, but will be ever seeking more, and though Gentile had inwardly decided not to remain there any longer, he pondered, "Come, now, why shouldn't I lay my hand on her breast a little while since I am here? I'll never touch her sweet body again, as I've never laid a hand on it before."

Dominated by his appetite, he slipped his hand in her breast, when suddenly, after he had left it there a while, he felt a light flutter, as though the heart were still beating. Casting off the dread that had seized him, he listened more intently and found that she was not dead, though there seemed but little life remaining in her. Nevertheless, with the help of his servant he drew her gently out of the sepulchre, and placing her before him on his horse, took her secretly to his house in Florence.

Now his mother, a virtuous and capable woman who was living there at the time, upon listening from beginning to end to what her son told her, was moved to pity, and without more ado, attended quietly to the fire and the bath, until what with the warmth and her ministrations, she succeeded in call-

ing back the poor lady's wandering senses. Catalina stirred, and a deep sigh escaped her.

"Where am I?" she said.

"Be of good cheer, my daughter," said the kindly soul. "You are among friends."

Catalina upon coming to, and looking about her without knowing where she was, became even more astonished, especially when she saw Messer Gentile standing before her.

"Tell me, I beg you, where I am!" she pleaded, turning to his mother. "How did I come here?"

Gentile told her the whole story from the beginning, which grieved her not a little. She hesitated a while, and then thanked him as best she could, but, "For the sake of the love you bore me," she besought him, "and for your honor's sake, let me not, while I am in your house, suffer anything at your hands that might reflect upon my virtue or the honor of my husband. And to-morrow please let me return to my own house."

"Catalina," replied Gentile, "whatever my desire may have been in the past, I intend neither now nor ever, to treat you otherwise than as a dear sister, whether here or anywhere else, since the Lord has vouchsafed me the grace of recalling you from death to life, by virtue of the love I bore you. Still, I think the good turn I did you to-night is deserving of some reward, and I trust you will not deny me the favor I shall ask of you."

"I shall be happy to grant it," she graciously replied, "if it is in my power and in keeping with my virtue."

"You know," said Gentile, "that all your friends and kinsfolk, in fact all the people in Bologna are certain you are dead. There is no one waiting for you at home. Promise me, then, as a special favor, to live here quietly with my mother until I return from Modona, which will be soon. The reason for my request? Simply that I would like to bestow you as a dear and precious gift upon your husband, in the presence of Bologna's foremost citizens."

Catalina, realizing her obligation to the young gentleman, and knowing that his request was honorable, consented to do as he said despite her impatience to rejoice the hearts of her dear ones by her resuscitation.

"I promise, on my word," she said.

Scarcely had the words escaped her lips, when she felt the throes of labor upon her. Tenderly, Gentile's mother ministered to her, and before long she was delivered of a handsome boy, to the infinite joy of them all. After the gentleman had taken care that she was provided with everything necessary for her comfort, and that she was assured of the attention she would have had if she had been his own wife, he returned secretly to Modona.

In due time, as his term of office drew to a close, he arranged for a magnificent reception to be held at his home on the morning of his arrival, to which he invited the most distinguished gentlemen of the town, among whom was Nicoluccio Caccianimico. Upon his return, he dismounted and found his guests already gathered. Catalina was home, too, lovelier and fresher than ever, with her baby-boy, radiant with health. His joy knew no bounds as he led his guests to their places at table, and had them served royally with various courses.

The dinner was nearly at an end when, after informing Catalina of his intention and instructing her concerning her behavior through it all, he addressed his guests.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I remember having heard of a certain Persian custom, in my estimation a gracious one. When a man would like to show his friend the greatest possible honor, he invites him to his home, and there shows him the thing he holds most dear, whether wife, mistress, daughter or anyone else, signifying that just as he sets before him his dearest treasure, so, too, even more willingly, would he show him his heart, if he could. It is this custom I would like to observe in Bologna. All of you have courteously honored my banquet, and I therefore would like to honor you, Persian style, by showing you the dearest thing I have in the world, or ever hope to have. But first and foremost, I'd like your opinion on a question I wish to set before you.

"Let us suppose a man has in his house a good and faithful servant, who suddenly falls mortally ill. The master, without even waiting for the servant to draw his last breath, has him thrown to the gutter and washes his hands of him. Then let us suppose a stranger comes along, who, out of pity for the sick man, carries him to his house, and with all tenderness and no care for expense, nurses him back to

health. Now the question is, were this new master to keep him and avail himself of his services, would his former lord be justified in complaining of the second, or blaming him, if he, upon being asked to return the servant, should refuse?"

Many and various were the arguments advanced by the guests, but when they arrived at a common opinion, they chose Nicoluccio Caccianimico, a fine, accomplished orator, as their spokesman.

First of all, he commended the Persian custom, and then he declared that both himself and the rest of the men concurred in the opinion that the first master had no further right to his servant, since he had not only forsaken him in his need, but cast him out into the street. Again, because of the second man's kindnesses, the servant had rightfully become his, for by keeping him, he did no harm, violence or injustice to the original master.

At that, all the other gentlemen seated about the tables—and many a worthy there was, too—declared themselves unanimously in favor of the view Nicoluccio had expressed.

Gentile, gladdened at the answer, and at the coincidence that Nicoluccio had been chosen to voice it, said he, too, was of their mind and then added, "It is now time for me to honor you as I promised."

Calling two of his servants, he sent them to Catalina, who was magnificently arrayed and adorned, according to his bidding, with the request that she do his guests the honor of gladdening them with her presence. She obeyed, and taking her lovely baby son in her arms, she entered the banquet-hall between the two attendants. Gentile then escorted her to the right of a noble lord, and said, "Gentlemen, this is the thing I hold most dear in the world, and which I shall ever most dearly cherish. Behold her, and see whether I am not justified!"

The guests showed her great honor, and their praise of her was lavish, as they declared to Gentile that he ought assuredly to hold her dear. Upon looking at her closely, there were many who would have taken her for Catalina, had they not thought her dead. Nicoluccio, most of all, gazed at her raptly, burning to know who she was. At last, unable to control his curiosity any longer, he waited until Gentile had drawn aside, and said, "I pray you, tell me,

madam, are you from Bologna or are you a stranger?"

It was difficult for Catalina to refrain from answering her husband, still, in obedience to her promise to Gentile, she was silent. Another asked if the child were hers, and still another whether she were married to Gentile, or related to him by ties of blood. But to all of them she answered not a word.

When Gentile returned, one of his guests remarked, "Truly, sir, this lady of yours is a lovely creature, but she seems to be dumb. Is she so, indeed?"

Then he said, "Gentlemen, the fact that she has not spoken is no small argument for her virtue."

"Tell us then yourself who she is," said the man who had first spoken.

"Willingly," Gentile answered, "but you must all promise solemnly that no matter what I say, you will not leave your seats until I have finished my story."

They promised, one and all; therefore, when the tables had been cleared, Gentile, taking a seat beside Catalina, began, "Gentlemen, this lady is that good and faithful servant concerning whom I raised the question a little while ago. Like him, she too, was ill-cared for by her people, and like a worthless thing that had outlived its usefulness, she, too, was flung into the middle of the street. But I raised her up. With my solicitude and the toil of my hands, I wrested her from death itself, while God, considerate of my unselfishness, made her flourish under my care, from a horrible corpse to the beautiful creature you now see. But the better to make you understand how all this came about, I shall tell you everything in a few words."

Accordingly, beginning his story from the time he fell in love with Catalina, he related to his hearers all that had happened up until that moment, much to their astonishment. "For these reasons," he added, "this lady justly belongs to me, if you, and Nicoluccio particularly, have not changed the opinion you expressed a short time ago. Yes, she belongs to me, nor could anyone rightfully claim her back from me."

No one dared reply; all were tensely waiting to hear what more he had to say, while Nicoluccio, Catalina and many of the guests wept silently for the pity of it. At last, Gentile rose to his feet. Taking the infant in his arms and the lady by the hand, he walked toward Nicoluccio.

"Come, rise, my friend," he said. "I am not returning to you the wife whom your kin and hers cast away. Rather, it is my intention to give to you this lady, my godson's mother, and this child, who I know is the fruit of your loins and whom I held at the font and named Gentile. Though she has lived in my house nearly three months, I beg you, do not hold her the less dear. For, by that God Who perhaps made me fall in love with her, that my love might be the cause of her salvation, as it has indeed proved to be—by that God I swear to you that never has she lived more honorably, either with her father or mother, or with you yourself, than she has here, under my mother's care, in my own house."

Then, turning to Catalina, he said, "Dear lady, henceforth I release you from all pledges made to me, and leave you free to return to your husband." With that, he placed the mother and child in Nicoluccio's keeping and resumed his seat. Passionately, Nicoluccio gathered his wife and son in his arms, his joy all the more intense for the meager hope he had had of fulfilling it, and offered thanks to Gentile as best he knew how. The guests, still weeping for pity of the strange case, commended Gentile for his nobility, as did everyone who ever heard of it. Amid great rejoicing, Catalina was welcomed to her own house, and for a long time the people of Bologna could not help looking upon her with wonder, as one risen from the dead.

As for Messer Gentile, as long as he lived, he remained a dear friend of Nicoluccio and of his people, and of his beloved lady's kin.

What have you to say to this story, kind ladies? Do you think that the fact that a king gave away his crown and scepter, that an abbot brought back a lost sheep to the pope's fold, and that an old man surrendered his throat to the knife of his enemy—do you think all these can compare with Gentile's sacrifice? He was young and passionate. He felt himself entitled to possess what the indifference of others had cast away, but which he, with the aid of his own good fortune, had gathered up. And still, even though he had in his power the being he desired with every thought of his brain, even though he was master of the dear object he yearned to seize, he not only tempered his passion like a man of honor, but generously restored his treasure to its owner.

Truly, I think none of the deeds already described can equal this for magnanimity.



DIANORA requires Ansaldo to give her a garden that in the month of January would be as beautiful as in May. With the help of a magician, to whom he pledges himself for a large sum, Ansaldo grants his lady's wish. Dianora's husband, learning what has happened, gives her permission to grant herself to her lover, who, hearing of the man's generosity, releases her from her word. At that the magician, too, relieves Ansaldo of his pledge and refuses to accept any reward for his pains.

EVERYONE of the happy band had already extolled Messer Gentile to the skies, when the king called upon Emilia to continue, and she plunged boldly into the argument, as though she had been waiting for a chance to speak.

Tender ladies, she began, no one can justly deny that Gentile acted most magnanimously. But if you say it is impossible for anyone to do more—well, it will not be so hard to show it can be done, as I intend proving by a short story of mine.

In the country of Friuli, which, though cold, is enlivened with noble mountains and a wealth of running streams and clear springs, there is a city called Udine, where once upon a time Dianora, a lovely lady, lived. She was married to a distinguished lord of great wealth called Gilberto, a charming man of amiable grace, but such was the lady's beauty that it obtained her the passionate love of Messer Ansaldo Gradense, a mighty baron of lofty rank, famed high and low for his prowess in arms and his feats of chivalry. He was so deeply enamored of her, that he left nothing undone to gain her favor. Again and again he pressed his suit by means of messages and letters, but to no avail. Now Dianora had become weary of the baron's solicitations, but seeing that although she denied him everything he sought he did not abandon his suit, she resolved to get rid of him by setting him a strange, and to her mind, impossible task.

Summoning the woman whom he often sent to her with his messages, she said to her one day, "Good woman, you've often assured me that Ansaldo loves me above everything in the world. Indeed, the gifts

he's offered me through you are marvelous. But let him keep them, for as far as I am concerned, they'll never induce me to love him or yield myself to his pleasure. However, if I could have definite proof that he loves me as much as you say, I should certainly give him my love and grant his every wish. So listen! If he promises to put his love to the test by performing the task I shall set him, I'll then put myself entirely at his disposal."

"What task would you have him do, my lady?" asked the woman.

"Only this," replied Dianora. "This coming month of January, I should like a garden on the outskirts of this city, full of verdant lawns, flowers and leafy shrubs, all as beautiful as in the month of May. If he does not give me this park, don't let him dare send you or anyone else to me again, for I swear if he troubles me again, just as surely as I have concealed his suit from my husband and family, I'll complain to them in such a strain, that I'll succeed in ridding myself of him."

When the baron heard the task the lady had set him, he thought it arduous indeed, and beyond the reach of possibility. Still, in spite of that, and in spite of the realization that she had imposed it for no other reason than to deprive him of all hope, he inwardly resolved to determine if it could be done, and sent messengers into various countries to find out whether there were anyone who could help or advise him in the matter.

At last, a certain individual presented himself, who offered to create the garden by magic, provided he were well rewarded for it. Messer Ansaldo came to terms with the wizard by offering him a fabulous sum of money, and joyfully awaited the appointed time to come.

Finally the first of January came, and bitter cold it was, with snow and ice covering the face of the earth. Nevertheless, in an open field on the outskirts of the city, the magician wrought his necromancy so skilfully all night long, that the following morning, according to the testimony of eye-witnesses, there sprang up one of the most exquisite gardens ever seen, glorious with grass, flowers and fruits of all kinds.

No sooner did Messer Ansaldo set eyes on it, to his great joy, than he had the most beautiful fruits and flowers growing there gathered and quietly

brought to his lady, with the invitation that she should go and behold the garden she had asked of him, and be convinced of his great love. Furthermore, he urged her to remember the promise she had made him and sealed with her oath, which, as a woman of her word, she should do her utmost to keep.

Dianora, however, upon seeing the flowers and fruits of the marvelous park, news of which had already reached her ears, began to regret her promise. Still, regret or no regret, she was curious to see the novelty, and set out to visit it with a group of other ladies of the city. It was a glorious sight indeed, and she praised the wonder of it, not without a feeling of awe, even though, on her return home, she was sadder than any woman alive at the thought of it and what it was going to cost her.

All day long she brooded and brooded upon it, until she could no longer conceal her despair. Her husband at last noticing that there was something preying on her mind, insisted on knowing what it was. For a long time, she could not utter a word for shame, but at last, compelled to speak, she told him everything as it had happened.

Anger at first flamed in Gilberto's breast, but then, considering the purity of Dianora's intention, he banished his wrath and said, with better judgment:

"Dianora, it is not proper for a discreet and modest woman to pay attention to such messages, or to make any kind of bargain involving her chastity, no matter what the conditions. Words that arrive at the heart through the ear's flattery, have much more power than many would believe, and almost anything is possible to men in love. You were wrong, Dianora, first to lend an ear to the suit, and then to make a bargain. But since I know you acted in the innocence of your heart, I shall grant you what perhaps no other man would, to enable you to fulfil your promise, influenced, too, as I am by fear of the wizard, who might be persuaded to work us some dreadful mischief by Ansaldo, if you played him false. I want you to go to Ansaldo. If you can, manage to make him release you from your pledge, while preserving your virtue at the same time. If not—for this time only, yield your body to him, but not your soul."

In tears, Dianora listened to her husband and shook her head, refusing to accept such a favor from

him. But Gilberto insisted in spite of her protests, and would not hear of being gainsaid.

Well, toward daybreak the following morning, Dianora, simply dressed, made her way to Messer Ansaldo's house with two of her lackeys before her, and her maid following in the rear. Ansaldo was amazed to hear that she had come, so rising, he sent for the magician and said, "I want you to see what loveliness your art has gained for me."

Respectfully, he went to meet her, accompanied by the magician, and received her honorably in a luxurious room where a cheery fire was burning, the lover, all the while, permitting no disorderly urge to rise in him. Then, after she was comfortably seated, he said:

"My lady, if the love I have cherished for you so long deserves to be rewarded, I beg you, do not be offended if I ask you to tell me candidly what brings you here at this hour, and in such company."

Flushed with shame, and with tears welling in her eyes, Dianora answered, "Sir, it is not any love I bear you, nor is it my promised word that brings me here, but the command of my husband who, more considerate of the labors of your ungoverned passion than of his honor and mine, obliged me to come. At his request, then, I am ready to do your will, for this once only."

If Messer Ansaldo wondered at the opening of Dianora's speech, his amazement grew apace as she went on. Touched by Gilberto's liberality, his passion gave way to tenderness.

"My lady," he said, "since things are as you say, far be it from me to wreck the honor of one who is considerate of my love. Hence, while you are pleased to stay here in my house, you will be treated with as much respect as though you were my sister. Then, when you are ready, you may go home in peace, render my thanks to your husband for such supreme courtesy, and assure him that henceforth he has in me a brother and a faithful servant."

Dianora was beside herself with joy at his assurance. "Ansaldo," she said, "knowing you as I did, nothing could have made me believe my coming here could have had any other outcome than this, and from the bottom of my heart I shall always be grateful to you for it."

Bidding him good-bye, she returned to her hus-

band, followed by an honorable escort, and told him what had happened, which, from then on, bound him and Ansaldo in a close tie of friendship.

Meanwhile, when the magician, to whom Ansaldo was preparing to give the promised reward, saw Gilberto's magnificent gesture toward Ansaldo, and then Ansaldo's toward the lady, "God forbid," he cried, "that after seeing Gilberto generous with his honor, and you with your love, I should not also be generous with my reward. Keep your money then, I beg you, for you can use it to good advantage."

Ansaldo was embarrassed by such liberality and did his utmost to persuade the magician to accept his payment, or at least part of it, but his coaxing was of no avail. On the third day the magician, removing his wonderful garden, decided to return to his own land. Accordingly, Ansaldo took leave of him and commended him to God, and quenching in his heart his lustful passion for Dianora, kindled in its place the pure flame of friendship.

What shall we say of this, tender ladies? Are we to place a lover's relinquishment of a lady well-nigh dead to him, and a love grown tepid with hope deferred, above the generosity of Ansaldo, who was much more ardently enamored than ever and, in a way, stirred to new hope by the possession of the dear object he had so long pursued? It is foolish to think that such a sacrifice could even be compared with the other!



KING Charles the First, called the Victorious, falls in love with a young girl but, ashamed of his folly, gives her and her twin-sister away in honorable marriage.

IT would be a long story indeed to recount the many arguments the ladies advanced in their effort to prove whether Gilberto, Ansaldo or the magician had behaved with the greatest magnanimity concerning Dianora. But after the king had given sufficient lee-way to the discussion, he looked at Fiammetta. "Tell us another story," he said, "and put an end to the dispute."

Without hesitating a moment, Fiammetta began:

Radiant ladies, I always thought that in merry gatherings like ours people usually spoke fully enough not to leave room for further dispute about

the matter under discussion, for after all, arguments and debates are more in keeping with scholars in universities than with us women, who have all we can do to handle the distaff and spindle. I had in mind to tell you something a little puzzling, but as what's already been told has raised such a storm among you, I'll lay that aside and tell you another story—not of any common mortal, but of a mighty king, who, as you shall hear, behaved most admirably, and much to his credit.

Every one of you, I'm sure, must often have heard of Charles the Old, or more properly, the First, through whose splendid undertaking, as well as through his glorious victory over King Manfred, the Ghibellines were banished from Florence and the Guelphs restored. As a result of this change, a certain gentleman called Neri degli Uberti left the city with his whole family and a considerable fortune, and resolving not to settle anywhere except under the protection of King Charles, in some quiet, solitary spot where he might end his days in peace, withdrew to Castellamare di Stabia, where, perhaps a bowshot from other dwellings, he bought a tract of land among the olive and walnut and chestnut trees that abound in that section of the country. There he had a fine spacious house built with a pleasant garden adjoining, in the midst of which, for the abundance of living water found therein, he had a sparkling fish-pond constructed in our fashion, and stocked generously with all kinds of fish.

After he had established himself in his comfortable house, with no other care in mind than to improve his land more and more each day, King Charles happened to come to Castellamare, seeking relief from the heat, and hearing of the beauty of the gentleman's garden, was most anxious to see it. However, upon discovering to whom the garden belonged, and that Neri was of the opposing faction, he thought it wiser to treat him like a friend, and therefore sent him word that he and four of his companions would be pleased to sup with him incognito the following evening, in his garden. Messer Neri appreciated the compliment immensely, and the preparations he made for the king's reception were splendid. After consulting with his family on what was to be done, he went into the garden and welcomed the king with all the tokens of joy he could manifest.

The king wandered all through the garden, and through the house, praising the beauty and comfort he saw. Then, after the tables had been laid beside the fish-pond, he performed his ablutions and took his seat, requesting Count Guy of Montfort, who had come with him, to sit on one side of him, and Messer Neri on the other. The rest of the companions he had brought with him, he commissioned to serve at table, according to their host's instructions.

The viands served were exquisite; the wines rare and excellent. Nor was there anything lacking in the courteous service, with its exactness and silence, which the king highly praised.

While he was relishing the good cheer and enjoying the seclusion of the place, two young girls of some fifteen years of age came into the garden. They were lovely and fair, with hair of spun gold curling about their shoulders and lightly clasped with a dainty wreath of myrtle blossoms. From the delicacy of their faces they seemed to be angels; so beautiful were they. Both were clad alike in gowns of soft, snow-white linen over their bare bodies, molding their forms tightly from the waist up, and falling in wide folds tent-wise to their feet. The first of the two carried a pair of small casting-nets over her shoulders, the ends of which she grasped in her left hand, and in her right she held a long rod. The other had a skillet slung over her left shoulder, a small bundle of kindling under the same arm, and in her left hand a tripod, while in the right she held a cruze of oil, and a light.

The king marveled at the sight of them, and waited in suspense to see what their coming meant. First, the girls came modestly before him, and blushing rosily, curtsied to him respectfully. Then they went to the entrance leading into the fish-pond, where the one who carried the skillet laid it down, together with the rest of her burdens, and took the rod the other carried. Both then stepped into the pond, the water of which covered them to the breast. As they did this, one of Messer Neri's attendants quickly kindled a fire under the tripod, placed the skillet above it, poured into it a quantity of oil and waited for the girls to throw him some fish.

Meanwhile, one of the damsels was busy prodding with the rod in the crannies where she knew the fish loved to hide, and the other cast the nets,

to the great delight of the king who had eyes for nothing but for their sport. Soon they had netted a great number of fish, part of which they threw to the attendant, who placed them in the skillet almost alive, as he had been instructed, and some, the finest, they flung upon the table before the king, Count Guy and Messer Neri. The creatures flopped about the table, to the huge delight of the king, who took them likewise in his hand and cast them back playfully to the fair fishermaids. So they played a while, until the attendant had cooked the fish he had been given, which he set before the king as Messer Neri had instructed him, not so much for the daintiness of the fare as for the sport it had afforded them all.

When the girls saw that the fish was ready and that their duty was done, they came out of the water, their thin white gowns that clung to their flesh scarcely concealing anything of their delicate bodies, and gathering up their implements, they passed before the king on their way to the house. Now the monarch, the count and the rest of his companions who were serving at table, had gazed their fill at the girls, each inwardly extolling them for their beauty of form and feature and for their modesty and charming manners. But the king had been smitten most deeply of all. Indeed, as they had come out of the pond, he had been so rapt in admiration of every detail of their bodies, that had anyone pricked him, he would not have been conscious of the pain.

The more he dwelt on them in his mind, the more zealously was his heart awakened to pleasure them, even though he had no inkling of who or what they were. He clearly saw that he would be in danger of falling in love if he didn't take care, but the strange thing was that he himself did not know which of the two damsels pleased him more, so wonderfully did they resemble each other. After he had let his thoughts range at their sweet will a while, he turned to his host.

"Who were those two young damsels?" he asked.

"Sire," replied Messer Neri, "those are my twin daughters, one of whom is called Ginevra the Lovely and the other Isolde the Fair."

The king was expansive in his praise of them to his host, and advised him to give them away in marriage, but Messer Neri excused himself, saying his means did not allow of his doing it with the

honor he desired. Supper had by this time been served, and only the fruit remained to be brought, when the two girls reappeared clad in exquisite silks, and bearing in their hands two large silver bowls full of the season's wealth of fruit, which they set upon the table before the king. Then, drawing a little aside, they began to sing a ballad, which opened with the words:

"O Love, 'twere long to sing

How deep my heart is wounded by thy sting."

They sang so sweetly, and with such winsome grace, that the king, who was all eyes for them, and listened with delight, felt as though the angelic choirs of heaven had come down to sing for him. Their song ended, the two sisters kneeled reverently before him, begging his leave to go, which he graciously gave them, though he was loth to have them leave.

Supper was soon over. The king and his companions took horse, and leaving Messer Neri, returned to the royal palace, talking and chatting of one thing and another.

Although the king kept his love a secret, he could not drive out of his mind the grace and charm of Ginevra the Lovely, no matter what grave duties he had to attend to; and for her sake he also loved her sister, for the resemblance she bore his beloved. As time went on, he became even more inextricably enmeshed in the snares of love, so that he could not bear to think of anything else. Thus, under pretense of other business, he struck up a close friendship with Messer Neri, whom he often visited in his delightful garden, merely for a glimpse of the lovely Ginevra.

Finally, he could put up with the torment no longer. Seeing no way of attaining his desire unless he took not only the one, but both girls from their father, he confided his passion and his resolution to Count Guy. The count, however, was a noble soul and a man of honor.

"Sire," he said, "I am aghast at what you tell me, and more so than any other man could be, for I was convinced, through my close contact with you since your childhood, that I knew your ways better than anyone else.

"In your early years, when love more readily lays hold of one, I never seemed to discover any such passion in you, and the thought that now, when old

age is almost upon you, you should be seized with such love, is so strange and new to me, that I think it almost a miracle. Truly, if it were becoming in me to cast any reproaches upon you for it, I know what I should say. Here you are, scarcely with your armor off, in the kingdom you've newly acquired, in the midst of people unknown to you and full of stratagems and treasons—here you are, I repeat, burdened with serious cares and the business of state, and not yet quite assured of your throne, and with all that, you have found room for a beguiling love. That is not the way for a great king to behave, but rather for a callow youth. What's more, and worse, you say you have decided to take the two girls from the innocent gentleman who entertained you in his own house with hospitality far beyond his means, who, the better to honor you, showed you his two daughters almost naked, proving to you thereby how great is the faith he reposes in you, whom he firmly believed to be a monarch and not a ravening wolf. What! Have you so soon forgotten that it was Manfred's dishonorable violences to women that opened you a way into this realm? What perfidy was there ever more deserving of eternal damnation than this you would be guilty of, by stealing from the man who generously received you his honor, his hope and comfort? What would people say if you did such a thing? Perhaps you think you could lightly exculpate yourself by saying, 'I did this to him because he was a Ghibelline.' Is it the habit of kingly justice to deal in this fashion with those who place themselves under its protection—no matter who they are? Bear in mind, O king, that if it was a great glory for you to have conquered Manfred, it is a still greater one to conquer yourself. You, then, whose duty it is to chasten others, triumph over yourself! Curb this appetite, and don't let such a blemish sully what you have so gloriously gained!"

These reproaches touched the king vitally, and stung the more cruelly for his consciousness of their truth. After an ardent sigh or two, "Count," he said, "I assure you that no matter how strong the enemy the well-tried warrior has to conquer, he will find him far weaker and easier to overcome than his own appetite. Still, great though the effort and inestimable the will required, your words have so goaded me, that before many days have passed, I'll prove

to you that just as I can conquer others, I can also be a victor over myself?"

Not long after this conversation the king returned to Naples, where, perhaps as much to rid himself of the temptation to behave unlike a man of honor, as to reward his host for the hospitality he had enjoyed, he resolved to give the two girls away in marriage, bitter though he found it to enrich others with what he desired for himself. Dowering them magnificently, not as Messer Neri's daughters, but as his own, he bestowed Ginevra upon Messer Mazzeo da Palizzi, with her father's consent, and Isolde the Fair upon Messer Guglielmo della Magna, high-born gentlemen both, and barons in their own right.

Thus, after giving the two damsels into their husbands' keeping, he returned, bitterly frustrated, to Apulia, putting his fiery appetite under such merciless discipline, that bursting at last through the sundered chain of love, he lived free of such passion to the end of his allotted days.

There are some, perhaps, who will say it was really no great matter for a king to give two girls away in marriage. Granted. But I call it great, very great, for a king to give the girl he loved to another, without having tasted so much as a leaf, a flower, or fruit of his love.

Well, so it was that this great-hearted king behaved, rewarding the noble knight magnificently, honoring the girls he loved by a praiseworthy deed, and courageously uprooting his passion from his heart.



KING Pedro, upon hearing how fervently he is beloved by the pining Lisa, comes to comfort her in her sick bed; then, marrying her to a noble youth, he kisses her on the brow, and declares himself from then on her knight.

WHEN Fiammetta had concluded her story and the manly generosity of King Charles had been much extolled, though a certain lady present was chary of her praise because of her Ghibelline sentiments, Pampinea began at the king's command:

No one of unprejudiced mind, worthy ladies, would deny good King Charles the praise you give

him, unless, of course, she had other reasons for bearing him a grudge. Something no less praiseworthy, which one of his political opponents did for one of our Florentine ladies, has just occurred to me, and so I shall be glad to tell it to you.

During the time the French were being driven from Sicily, a Florentine apothecary of excellent means called Bernardo Puccini, was living in Palermo with the only offspring with which his wife had blessed him, a rarely beautiful girl, ripe enough for marriage.

One day, while King Pedro of Arragon, who had recently become ruler of the island, was holding a magnificent festival in that city with all his knights and lords, and tilted in the style of the Catalans, Bernardo's daughter, whose name was Lisa, happened to see him racing in the ring, from a balcony where she was standing with other women, and was so marvelously smitten with him that as she gazed and gazed, she fell desperately in love. When the tournament was over, and she remained in her father's house, she could think of nothing but this splendid high-flung love of hers, and only one thing made her miserable—the knowledge of her own lowly station, which gave her no hope at all of any happy outcome. Nevertheless, she could not persuade herself to relinquish her love, though for fear of great trouble she dared not reveal it. The king, on his part, knew nothing of this infatuation, nor did he care, which caused Lisa more intolerable suffering than anyone can imagine.

Now while Lisa's love grew stronger and stronger within her, and hopeless melancholy settled on melancholy, she could not bear up under the strain and fell sick, visibly languishing more and more each day, like snow in the heat of the sun. The girl's parents, in despair at this misfortune, did their utmost to recall her to health, getting her the best of physicians and medicines. But nothing availed, for hopeless and sick at heart, she had elected to live no more.

One day, when her father offered to grant her every wish if only to rejoice her, she was suddenly inspired to make her love and resolution known to the king before she died, if possible, and therefore she begged him to bring before her Minuccio d'Arezzo, renowned in those days as a skilled singer and musician, and a favorite of the monarch's. Bernardo

thought Lisa simply wished to hear him sing and play for her a while, and sent a messenger to the bard, who, being a kindly and pleasant man, came to her immediately.

At first he sought to comfort her with loving words, then, on his viol, he softly played her a sweet melody and sang a song or two which, instead of soothing the love-sick maiden as he intended, only intensified her ardor. Finally, she said she wished to have a word alone with him, and when the others had withdrawn, she said,

"Minuccio, I have chosen you as the trusty confidant of my secret, first, in the hope that you'll never disclose it to anyone but the man I mention, and then, that you may help me as much as it is in your power to do so. That is my prayer. You must know, dear Minuccio, that the day our King Pedro celebrated the high festival of his rise to power, it was my fortune to see him at his feats of arms to such advantage, that my soul was kindled to flame for love of him—and you now see how that flame has consumed me! I knew of how little value my love was to the greatness of a king, but as I could not cool my ardor, much less quench it altogether, it became so hard for me to bear that, as the lesser suffering, I chose to die, as indeed I shall. I know, however, that I would depart this world in misery if my king did not know of it. Thus, not knowing by whom I could better communicate my resolution to him, I wish to commit the charge to you. Do not deny me, Minuccio, I beg of you. Then, when you have told him of my love and grief, let me know, that I may die comforted and escape my suffering."

Weeping, she said no more.

Minuccio marveled at the nobility of her soul and at her ruthless resolution. Pity plucked at his heart, and in a flash he saw how he could honorably serve her.

"Lisa," he said, "I pledge you my solemn faith, by which you may rest assured you'll never suffer betrayal. You have my admiration for having set your heart to love so great a king, and I offer you my aid, which, if you'll be of good cheer, I shall so well employ, that before three days have passed I hope to bring you news to rejoice your soul. I shall go instantly, that I may begin at once."

Again, before he left, the pining girl entreated

him to do his best, promised to be of good cheer, and wished him the best success. Minuccio then took leave of her, and went in search of a certain Mico de Siena, an accomplished rhymers of his day.

"Make me a poem on such and such a theme," he said, and had him compose the following canzonet:

"Make haste, O Love, and to my master go,
And tell him one by one the pains I bear;
Say how my death I near,
Hiding through fear what I would have him
know.

With folded hands your mercy, Love, I cry,
Begging you go there where my sweet lord
stays;

Say how for yearning oft he makes me sigh,
And with his gentle art my heart waylays.

So great his scorching flame, I fear to die
Burning therein, and yet I count the days
Before relief my woeful pain allays,

Which yet for longing of him I must bear
In modesty and fear.

For God's sweet sake, let him my torment
know!

Since first, O Love, my heart to him I gave,

You did not grant me courage to reveal
A single spark of my dear wish, or brave
To manifest the yearning that I feel

For him who holds me in such torment grave.

Alas, this death to die were anguish real!

Still, it might please him were I to reveal

And not withhold the agony I bear!

If only Love would dare

Him but a little of my flame to show!

And yet, O Love, since you would not inspire

Me with assurance such to open wide

My weary heart to my sweet lord and sire—

For sign or message ever was denied!—

I beg you of your mercy, Love, require

Him to remember how I saw him ride

That day with shield and lance, full panoplied

Among the knights, and look so debonair

That I could not forbear

To look and love, to my heart's bitter
woe!"

These words Minuccio then set to the soft, sad

music they required, and on the third day presented himself at court. The king, as it chanced, was still at table, and when he saw the bard, "Sing me a song to the music of your viol!" he said.

Accordingly, Minuccio sang this new song, and so sweetly did he chant and play, that everyone in the royal hall seemed spell-bound listening, so hushed were they, and rapt, the king if possible even more so than his men. At last, when Minuccio had let the echoes of his voice die away, the king said, "Where did you get this new song, for it seems to me I've never heard it before?"

"Sire," replied Minuccio, "scarcely three days have passed since the words were made, and the melody," and when the king wished to know for whom, "I can disclose it only to you, sire," he said.

The king, curious to hear what the troubadour had to say, called him to his chamber as soon as the tables were cleared, and there Minuccio told him everything meticulously. The king was glad to hear the story, and he praised the maiden highly, saying it behooved one to be considerate of so brave a girl. "Go to her," he said, "and comfort her on my part, and tell her that to-night at eventide I shall come to visit her."

Minuccio, happy to be bearing such glad tidings to Lisa, hastened to her with his viol, and when he was alone with her first told her all that had happened, and then sang for her the song of her love, to the music of his instrument. So joyful was the girl, and so comforted, that in a very short time she showed remarkable signs of returning health, to the wonder of her people, who did not know to what it was due. Anxiously, she waited for evening to fall, when she would behold her love.

After Minuccio's departure, the king, who was a good and magnanimous lord, had thought again and again of the things the bard had told him. He knew Lisa, and her great beauty, and became more than ever compassionate of her lot. Toward vespertime he mounted his horse, and pretending he was going riding for his pleasure, came to the apothecary's house. He had the gate leading to Bernardo's handsome garden opened for him, and dismounting, said to his host after a while, "How is your daughter Lisa? Is she married yet?"

"Ah no, sire," replied Bernardo. "She is not

married. On the contrary, she has been very ill, and is still in great danger, though strangely enough, since early this afternoon, she seems to have improved wonderfully."

The king instantly understood what lay beneath this improvement and said, "In faith, it would be a great shame for so lovely a creature to be taken from the earth. We should like to go in to see her."

Unattended except by two companions, he soon followed Bernardo into Lisa's room, and going to the bed where the girl had awaited his coming with longing and impatience, he took her hand in his, as she lay upon a mound of pillows, and said, "What is this, dear child? You are young. You should be a comfort to others, and here you allow yourself to pine away! Pluck up your spirits, I beg of you, for love of us, and return to health again."

When Lisa felt upon her the touch of the man's hands whom she loved above everything in the world, she experienced such joy, mingled with shyness, that she felt as though she had been in heaven. "My lord," she said to him with an effort, "it was the strain to subject my feeble strength to great burdens that caused my illness, from which you will soon see me delivered, thanks to your kindness."

The king alone could understand the girl's veiled speech. His admiration for her grew apace, and more than once he inwardly cursed Fortune for having made her the daughter of so humble a man. Then, after staying with her a little longer and encouraging her to bear up, he went away.

This consideration on the part of the king was highly extolled by the people, and interpreted greatly to the credit of the apothecary and his daughter, who was as happy over the event as ever any woman was over her lover. Buoyed by more hope, Lisa recovered her health in a few days, and became even more beautiful than ever before.

Meanwhile, the king had consulted his queen about what reward to bestow upon the maiden for such adoration. When Lisa was well again, he took horse with a large following of his lords, and going into the apothecary's garden, he sent for him and his daughter. The queen presently made her appearance with many ladies in waiting, who received the young girl in their midst with welcome and acclaim. The sovereigns then called her to them, and the king spoke.

"Noble child," he began, "the love you bear us has won you a great honor with which, for our sake, we hope you will be content. Since you are of an age to enter the state of matrimony, we would have you marry the youth we have chosen for you; but we shall still consider ourselves your knight, and claim, of your exceeding love, one single kiss."

Lisa, flushing scarlet with embarrassment, subjected her will to the king's pleasure, and in a soft voice she said, "My lord, I am aware that if it were known I had dared to fall in love with your highness, I should be considered insane by most people, who might perhaps suppose that I had failed to take into consideration your lofty estate and my mean condition. But God, Who alone penetrates into the hearts of us mortals, God, I say, knows that from the first moment I fell in love, I was well aware you were a king, and I only the daughter of Bernardo the druggist, unworthy of setting my fervent love so high. Your highness knows better than I, however, that nobody here on earth falls in love according to fitness, but only according to the dictates of desire and pleasure. More than once, my feeble strength pitted itself against that law. I was powerless against it. Thus I loved you, I still love you, and will continue loving you as long as I live. From that first moment, I resolved always to make your will my law. Therefore, I shall not only gladly accept the husband your highness sees fit to bestow upon me, and cherish him in the state and honor of matrimony, but even if you were to command me to stand in the midst of flames, I would consider the pain a joy, if I thought it gave you pleasure. As for having your highness, a king, as my knight—what can I answer? Your highness knows how such an honor befits a poor girl like me. Nor can I grant you the only kiss you would claim of my love, without the leave of my lady, the queen. Nevertheless, for the great goodness your highness has shown me, and also her ladyship the queen here beside you, may the Lord give you thanks and the reward you deserve, for I could never be rich enough to repay you fittingly."

Then she was silent.

The queen was mightily pleased with the girl's answer, and found her to be indeed as wise as her husband had described her. Then the king, sum-

moning Lisa's father and mother, and finding them quite content with what he intended doing, sent for a highborn but indigent youth by the name of Perdicone, and putting some rings into his willing hand, married the happy youth to Lisa. Then and there, besides the many rare jewels which he and the queen gave the bride, he bestowed upon the youth the thriving and fruitful lands of Ceffalu and Calatellotta, saying, "We are merely giving you these as the bride's portion. What more we intend doing for you, the future will display." Then, turning to Lisa, "Now we shall claim the fruit owing us from your love," he said, and taking her head between his hands, he kissed her on the brow.

The groom and Lisa's parents and the bride herself were as happy as could be. The bridal-feast was magnificent, and the nuptials joyous. According to what many asserted, the king kept his promise faithfully to the lady, for as long as he lived he always called himself her knight and never engaged in any feat of arms unless he wore only the favor she had sent him.

It is by such behavior that a king gains the love of his subjects, inspires others to do well, and acquires undying fame, toward which, alas, few princes nowadays bend the bow of their intellects, fallen as they are into ruthlessness and tyranny.

THE EIGHTH STORY

SOPHRONIA, believing herself married to Gisippus, discovers she is the wife of Titus Quintius Fulvus, and goes with him to Rome where Gisippus later arrives in dire poverty. He is under the impression Titus has scorned him, and accuses himself of having murdered a man, so that he may be put to death. Titus recognizes him, and to save his friend, takes the guilt upon himself. The true murderer, however, on beholding Titus' noble action, gives himself up, whereupon they are all set free by Octavianus. Later Titus gives his sister in marriage to Gisippus, and shares all his goods with him.

Now that Pampinea had ceased speaking and King Pedro had been highly commended by the ladies, particularly by the Ghibelline, Filomena began, at the king's request:

Who doesn't know, noble ladies, that if only kings desire, they have it in their power to accom-

plish any deed, however great—in fact, that magnificent endeavor is especially required of them? The man who has the power, and does what is expected of him, does well. But people should not wonder at it, or exalt him to such heights with their praise as they should another of humbler means, of whom less is demanded. Now if you appreciate the deeds of kings to such extent, and lavish such praise upon them, I've no doubt you'll admire and extol those of our equals even more, particularly when they compare favorably, or even surpass a monarch's in splendor. Accordingly, I intend to illustrate my idea by telling you the story of the noble and generous behavior of two citizens and friends toward each other.

In the days when Octavianus Caesar was not yet Augustus, but governed the Roman empire in the Triumvirate, there lived a patrician called Publius Quintius Fulvus, who, because his son Titus showed remarkable mental prowess, sent him to Athens to learn philosophy and earnestly commended him to the care of an old friend of his, an Athenian gentleman called Chremes. Titus was adopted as a member of the family, and shared the apartment of Gisippus, Chremes' son. Then, when the time came, the two youths were sent to study together under the tutelage of Aristippus, the philosopher.

As the young men associated with each other, they discovered that they were so similar in their tastes, that a great bond of friendship sprang up between them, never to be severed by any hazard but death, nor could they enjoy a moment's comfort and peace unless they shared it. They commenced their studies together, and since each was equally endowed with a fine intellect, they rose to the glorious heights of philosophy with equal speed, receiving wondrous praise. Thus for three years they pursued their studies, to the extreme gratification of Chremes, who scarcely knew which was the more his son. But alas, as is the way of all things mortal, Chremes, already stricken in years, departed this life, causing the youths such grief by his loss, who was almost their common father, that the friends and kinsfolk of the departed scarcely knew which of the two young men required more consolation.

After the friends and kin of Gisippus had been with him some months, both they and Titus advised him to marry, and found him a wondrously beauti-

ful Athenian girl of noble rank called Sophronia, who was then about fifteen years old. One day Gisippus, as the time of his marriage to her approached, begged his friend to accompany him on a visit, as Titus had not yet seen her, and he consented. When they arrived at her house and Sophronia sat between them, Titus began to look at her closely, perhaps to judge the beauty of his friend's future wife, but as he gazed and gazed, and every lovely feature of her filled him with pleasant admiration, he fell as madly in love with her as ever man did with woman, though outwardly he evinced no sign of change. For a while they sat and chatted with her, and then took leave of her and returned home, Titus going directly to his room, where, in solitude, he thought of Sophronia, falling the more hopelessly in love, the more he dwelt upon her. He could not help but recognize what had happened to him, and sighing like a furnace, he reflected:

"Ah, woe to your wretched life, Titus! Where, and upon whom do you set your heart, your love and all your hope? Don't you realize that for all the consideration you've received from Chremes and his people, for the friendship that binds you and Gisippus whose bride Sophronia will be, you must hold her in such esteem as you would a sister of your own flesh and blood? Do you know whom you love? To what lengths will you let yourself be carried by your treacherous love and your deceptive hope? Open the eyes of your mind, and know yourself, poor wretch! Let reason hold sway! Curb your lustful passion, temper your unholy desires, and address your thoughts to other pursuits! Come, nip your lust in the bud and triumph over yourself while you can. What you desire is not becoming to you! It is not honorable! Even if you were certain of gaining it—which you are not!—it would be the better part of valor for you to flee from it, if you had any regard for the claims you owe true friendship. What are you going to do, then, Titus? If you care to do what you ought, abandon this unbecoming love of yours."

But then, as he called to mind the beautiful Sophronia, his reason turned tail and denounced all his good resolutions, saying, "The laws of Love are stronger than all others. They not only render those of friendship null and void, but even the laws of God. How often have we heard of a father falling in

love with his daughter? Of a brother with his sister? Of a stepmother with her foster son?—all of them far more monstrous than for a youth to love his friend's wife, which has been known to happen a thousand times at least! Over and above this, I am young, and youth is entirely subject to the laws of Love. If Love ordains, it is for me to submit! Honor and such things are for older folks: I am acting only according to Love's bidding. Sophronia's beauty deserves the adoration of every man alive, and if I, a youth, love her, who can with any justice condemn me for it? I don't love her because she belongs to Gisippus: I would love her no matter whose she was! In this case, Fortune alone is to blame for giving her to Gisippus instead of to someone else. Moreover, if it is Sophronia's lot to be loved—and such beauty as hers certainly deserves love!—Gisippus should be grateful to learn that I'm the one who does the loving and not an utter stranger."

This new argument sent him back to the first in contempt of himself, but only to return again to where he had begun, carrying on the bootless debate until he had not only wasted all that day but also the following night and many others besides, until for loss of sleep and appetite, he was obliged to take to his bed.

For several days, Gisippus had noticed his friend brooding and aloof, and now that he saw him quite ill, he was deeply affected. He would not leave his side for a moment, but tried every possible wile and tenderness to cheer him, pleading with him repeatedly to tell him the cause of his melancholy and his sickness. Many a time Titus had put him off with some transparent lie, which Gisippus had discovered, but at last, feeling it incumbent upon himself to confess, he answered him with sighs and tears:

"Gisippus, dear friend, if it had only pleased the gods, I assure you death would have been far more preferable to me than life. To think that fate gave me the opportunity of putting my virtue to the test and—to my shame be it said, virtue failed! But I expect from it only the reward I deserve—death, Gisippus, and a speedy death, for I assure you it will be far more acceptable to me than life with the memory of my dastardliness! Yes, I will confess it to you, dear friend, for I cannot, I must not hide anything from you. But oh, the shame for me!"

Thereupon, beginning from the beginning, Titus confessed the cause of his brooding to his friend, told him of his mortal struggles, confessed which side had triumphed, and finally avowed that he was dying for love of Sophronia. "I knew how unbecoming it was of my friendship," he declared, "and to atone for it I am resolved to die, which I trust will be soon."

Upon hearing his friend's words and witnessing the tears that accompanied them, Gisippus reflected a while before answering, for he, too, had been captivated by Sophronia's charms, though in a lesser degree; but it was not long before he concluded that Titus' life should be dearer to him than the girl. Tears welled in his eyes, stimulated by those of Titus, and weeping he answered him:

"Dear friend, if you were not in such need of comfort, I should bring a case against you for violating our plighted friendship, by keeping your ardent passion hidden from me so long. Though your love does not seem an honorable thing to you, still, what is dishonorable should no more be concealed from one's friend than what is honorable, because just as a man shares his friend's joy in honorable deeds, he also shares the task of freeing his mind from what is dishonorable. Enough of this now, and let me come to what I know is more important. It is no great wonder to me that you should love Sophronia, my betrothed. Indeed, I'd wonder if you did not love her, cognizant as I am of her beauty and the nobility of your mind, which is the more readily moved to love the greater the excellence of the adored object. Now the more justified you are in loving Sophronia, the more unjustly you condemn fate (though you do not say so), for having given her to me, thinking as you do that your love would have the sanction of honor, had she belonged to someone else.

"But pray, tell me, if you are still as wise as you used to be, to whom could fate have better given her than to me—for which you should be mighty thankful! If Sophronia had fallen to the lot of any other man, no matter how chaste your passion, he would have preferred to keep her for himself than to give her to you—which you may rest assured you need not fear from me, if you consider me as much your friend as I am. When, since we first knew each other, can I remember ever having had anything

that was not as much yours as mine? Even if my relations with Sophronia had become such that nothing else were possible, I would still do with her as I have done with everything I've ever had. As it is, however, the affair is still in a stage where I can make her entirely yours, as I will. For why should you hold my friendship so dear, if when I found it possible to do something honorably, I failed to make your will my own? True enough, Sophronia is my betrothed, whom I dearly loved, and whose marriage to me I anticipated with great joy. But since you, more appreciative than myself, yearn for so precious a thing much more ardently, rest assured that when she enters the bridal-chamber she will not come as my wife, but as yours. Dispel your gloomy thoughts, then! Chase away melancholy and summon back your lost health, your cheer and gladness! Come, and from this very moment, look forward happily to the reward of your love, which is more deserving than mine."

As Titus listened, the more his friend's roseate hopes filled him with pleasure, the more his reason moved him to shame at the consciousness that, the greater Gisippus' generosity, the more unseemly it was of him to take advantage of it. Hence, without ceasing his weeping, he answered him with difficulty, "Ah, Gisippus, your true and loyal friendship shows me all too clearly what it behooves mine to do. God forbid I should ever deprive you of the woman He gave you, who are the more deserving of her! If He had thought her more fitting for me to have, neither you nor anyone else could believe He would have given her to you! Rejoice in your election, then, and use your prudent counsel and His gift! Leave me to waste away in the tears He has adjudged my lot, as one unworthy of such a treasure! Either I triumph over them, which will gladden your heart, or they master me, in which case I shall be free of suffering!"

"Titus," said Gisippus, "if our friendship permits of my compelling you to acquiesce to my desire, and if it can succeed in persuading you to do so, I will certainly take advantage of it to the utmost in this instance. And if you should not submit docilely to my prayers, I will bring you to do so with the compulsion permissible for the good of one's friend, and manage things in such a way that

Sophronia will be yours. I know how much Love's powers can encompass, and that not in a single instance, but in many cases, it has brought lovers to an unhappy death. Indeed, I can see you are so near the verge of it, that you can neither turn back, nor even control your tears. You'll perish, surely, at this rate, and I know beyond a doubt that I should soon follow you. Even if I loved you for nothing else, Titus, I must cherish your life for the sake of my own. Sophronia will be yours, then, my friend. You could not easily find any other woman to love so dearly, whereas I, on the contrary, could lightly bend my heart to another. Thus, you see, I'll be satisfying you and myself at the same time. Doubtless I'd not be so magnanimous if wives were as scarce and as hard to find as friends. So, then, since I can very easily find myself another wife but not another friend, I had rather—I shall not say lose her, for I should not be losing her by giving her to you, but simply turning her over to another and better self—I had rather, as I said, offer her to you, than lose you. Now then, if my entreaties have any power to move you, I pray you, pull yourself out of this dejection and make us both happy at the same time. Rejoice! Think hopefully of taking that happiness which your ardent love desires of your loved one!"

Although Titus was ashamed to consent to his friend's desire and stood his ground a while longer by refusing to take Sophronia as his wife, nevertheless, urged on the one hand by his passion and on the other by the pleas of Gisippus, he said, "I must confess, dear friend, I don't know which I'd be doing more, your pleasure, or mine, if I did what you so earnestly urge me to do. But since your generosity is so great that it dominates my just shame, I will do as you say. But be sure of one thing: I am not going into this like a man who does not realize that he owes you not only the woman he loves, but with her, his life. The gods grant it may be possible that some day I may still prove to your honor and credit how grateful I am for what you, more merciful of me than I myself, are doing for me."

When he had done, "Titus," said Gisippus, "if we want to be successful in this undertaking of ours, this, I think, is the way to go about it. As you know, after much parleying between my kin and Sophronia's, she has at last become my betrothed, so that

if I were now to say I no longer wished to have her for my wife, a great scandal would be raked up, to the sorrow of my family and hers. That's the last thing that would trouble me, however, if through it all I could see my way to make her yours. I'm afraid, though, that if I gave her up at this point, her people would immediately marry her off to someone else who perhaps would not be yourself, and so you would be losing what I had not obtained. With your consent, therefore, I think I shall proceed with what I have begun, bring her home as my bride, and celebrate the wedding. Later we'll know how to arrange to have you lie with her as with your wife. Then, at the proper time and place, we'll reveal the true state of affairs. If her folks are content with them, well and good. If not, we cannot undo what has been done, and they'll have to be satisfied, willy-nilly."

Titus found the proposal satisfactory and soon recovered his pristine vigor. Accordingly, Gisippus welcomed Sophronia home as his bride, and after the joyous festivities were over and night had fallen, the women left the newly-married girl in her husband's bed and went away.

Now Titus' bedroom adjoined his friend's, so that it was easy for one to go from one room to the other. Thus, when Gisippus was in his chamber and all the lights were extinguished, he went softly to his friend and told him to go and lie with his lady. Shame took hold of Titus at this point, and he would willingly have given up everything and refused to go; but Gisippus was as wholeheartedly bent upon his friend's pleasure as his words had indicated, and finally, after a long struggle, he persuaded the youth.

In the bridal bed, Titus clasped Sophronia in his arms, and then, as if in jest, asked her softly, "Do you consent to be my wife?" "I do," she said, thinking he was Gisippus, whereupon the youth, slipping a fine and precious ring upon her finger, said, "And I want to be your husband."

The marriage performed, he took long and amorous joy of her body, and neither she nor anyone else ever suspected that any man but Gisippus had lain with her.

Now while Sophronia and Titus were living in this manner as man and wife, Publius, his father,

died, and word was sent him to return at once to Rome to look after his affairs. He deliberated with Gisippus about taking Sophronia along with him, which could not easily be contrived without disclosing to her how the matter stood. One day, therefore, they called her into the room and revealed the whole situation to her, which Titus further clarified by pointing out various little incidents that had happened between them.

At first she looked from one to the other somewhat indignantly, and then, condemning Gisippus' deceit, she burst into a flood of angry tears. Before even venturing to discuss the matter in the house of Gisippus, she took refuge in her father's, and informed her parents of the treachery the youth had practiced both upon her and them. "I am not his wife, as you believe, but Titus'," she cried.

It was most unwelcome news to Sophronia's father, and many and bitter were the complaints he made to his people and those of Gisippus, stirring up endless tale-bearing and to-do about the whole affair. Not only the family of Sophronia, but Gisippus' own flesh and blood turned against the youth for his deed, saying he deserved not only censure but dire punishment. On his part, he staunchly maintained that he had done an honorable deed, for which Sophronia's kin should have been grateful, in that he had given her in marriage to a better man than himself.

Titus, on the other hand, listened to all the recriminations with exceeding annoyance, knowing as he did that the Greeks were bold with threats and noise until they came upon the person to bring them to their senses, when they became not only meek, but craven. "They need someone to put a check on their nonsense," he thought, and having himself the spirit of Rome and the wisdom of Athens, he skillfully managed to assemble Sophronia's and Gisippus' relatives in a temple, where, entering with his friend as his sole companion, he addressed them.

"It is believed by many philosophers," he began, "that whatever mortals do has been decreed and preordained by the immortal gods, making all that has either been or has ever to be, the fruit of necessity, though there are some who maintain that this necessity applies only to what has been. Now if these opinions are shrewdly looked into, it will be clear as

daylight that to resent an event that cannot be altered, is tantamount to declaring one's wisdom greater than the gods', who, we must believe, ordain and regulate us, and all that concerns us, with infinite judgment and no possibility of error. Hence you can see at once how foolish and presumptuous it would be to take exception to their divine operations, and how much in need of restraint are those who let themselves be carried away by their boldness in this respect. To my judgment, you are all as I describe, if there's any truth in what I believe you said and are still saying about the fact that Sophronia became my wife, though you had bestowed her upon Gisippus, failing to realize that *ab eterno* she was destined not to be his, but mine, as is manifest from the actual result.

"However, since it is difficult and beyond the reach of many to understand this talk of the secret providences and intentions of the gods, I shall be pleased to descend to the ways of mankind, supposing for the nonce that the gods care nothing for our concerns. But speaking in terms of understandable humanity, I shall be obliged to do two things contrary to my nature—first, to speak somewhat in praise of myself, and then, to blame or belittle someone else. Still, as I've no intention of straying from the truth, either in the one or the other of these things, and as the present subject demands it, I will do it.

"All your complaints, incited more by wrath than reason, your continual protests, indeed, your vulgar recriminations, blame, attack and condemn Gisippus for having given me as my wife, of his own judgment, the woman you had given him of yours. For this deed of his I hold him to be worthy of the highest praise. Why? First, because he did his duty as a friend, and second, because he acted with greater wisdom than you did. It is not my present purpose to expatiate on what the sacred laws of friendship dictate that one friend should do for another. It suffices me to have reminded you solely that the ties of friendship are more binding than those of blood or kin, since we choose our friends, while Fortune thrusts our kin upon us. Hence, if Gisippus esteemed my life dearer than your goodwill, it is not to be wondered at, as I am, and hold myself to be, his friend.

"But now for the second reason, whereby it will

be necessary to prove more clearly to you that he was wiser than you, seeing that you apparently care nothing for the decrees of the gods, and know less of the duties of friendship. Granted that your wisdom, your counsel and your deliberation gave Sophronia to Gisippus, a youth and a philosopher. His wisdom bestowed her upon a youth and a philosopher. Your counsel gave her to an Athenian; his, to a Roman. Again, yours gave her to a man of high rank; his, to a man of still higher degree. Yours gave her to a rich youth; his, to a very rich. Yours, to a youth who not only did not love her, but hardly knew her; and his, to one who loved her above every happiness, more than his very life.

"Would you care to know that what I say is true, and that Gisippus was wiser in his deed than you? Let us examine the matter in detail. That I am young and a philosopher like Gisippus, both my face and the studies I have pursued will clearly show, without dwelling longer on that score. We are both of the same age, and together we progressed in our studies with an equal pace. True, he is an Athenian and I am a Roman. But shall we argue about the glory of our respective cities? Well then, I am of a free city; he is of a tributary. I am of a city that is mistress of the world; he is of one obedient to mine. I am of a city flourishing in arms, in power and in learning, whereas he is of one that can boast only of the last. Again, though you see me here, a very humble scholar, don't imagine I have sprung from the dregs of the Roman people. My houses and the public squares of Rome are full of the ancient statues of my forbears, and Roman annals abound in countless triumphs led by the Quintii to the very capitol. Nor has the glory of our name decayed with age, for to-day more than ever it flourishes triumphant.

"Modesty bids me say nothing of my wealth, bearing in mind as I do that honest poverty has since time immemorial been the vastest patrimony of Rome's noble citizens. Still, since poverty is despised in the opinion of the vulgar and riches glorified, I may say, not as a grasping man, but as one whom Fortune favored, that I am well-provided with wealth.

"It is easy to understand that you should have been glad to have Gisippus here in Athens as your relative. But there is no reason why I, in Rome,

should be less appreciated, when you take into account the fact that there you would have in me an excellent host, and a useful, zealous, influential patron in all your needs, both public and private. Who is there, then, who judging this with reason and not with his own peculiar prejudice, would commend your wisdom above that of Gisippus? Nobody, surely. Accordingly, Sophronia is well-bestowed as the wife of Titus Quintius Fulvus, a noble, wealthy Roman citizen of ancient lineage and the friend of Gisippus. Anyone, therefore, finding anything to blame or bewail in this, does not behave as he should, nor does he know what he is doing.

"Some of you may object that Sophronia does not complain because she is the wife of Titus, but because of the way she became his wife—secretly and by stealth, neither kith nor kin knowing anything about it. It is no miracle, neither is it anything unheard of. I say nothing of girls who marry against their fathers' will, of others who elope with their lovers and are their mistresses before they become their wives, and again, of those who disclose their marriages to the world by the fruits of pregnancy and childbirth, before they confess them with a word—all of which necessity has rendered acceptable to their relatives. None of these was the case with Sophronia. On the contrary, she was given in marriage by Gisippus to Titus, in due form and in all propriety and honor.

"Others will say that it was not the place of Gisippus to bestow her on a husband, a foolish objection, and a womanish, arising from little reflection. It is nothing new for fate to bring matters to their predestined course by devious ways and means. What do I care if a cobbler, rather than a philosopher, had handled some concern of mine according to his lights, secretly or otherwise, if the result is good? Should the cobbler prove indiscreet, I have only to take care that he'll not have a chance to meddle with my affairs again, and give him my thanks for what he has done. The fact is, if Gisippus bestowed Sophronia well, it is unnecessary puerility to complain about him and the way he went about it. Have you no confidence in his wisdom? Take care that he'll not have a chance to marry off any other of your daughters, and thank him for this once.

"There's one thing I want you to know, however. Never, either by cunning or fraud did I seek to defile the honor and purity of your blood, in the person of Sophronia. True, I married her in secret. But I did not come as a ravisher to rob her of her virginity, nor as an enemy, scorning to ally my blood with yours or seeking to have her in any but an honorable way. Her radiant beauty and her virtue inflamed me to passionate love. However, realizing that if I had asked for her hand according to the procedure you think I should have used, she would have been denied me because of the great love you bear her, in your fear that I would have taken her to Rome, I employed the secret stratagem which may now be revealed to you, and entreated Gisippus to do that which he did not desire—consent in my name. Again, though I loved her passionately, never did I seek her embraces as a lover, but only as a husband. I did not even approach her, as she herself can truly bear witness, until I had duly made her my wife with the proper ceremony and the ring, and asked her whether she would accept me as her husband, to which she answered, yes. If now she considers herself sinned against, it is not I who should be blamed, but herself for not asking me who I was.

"This, then, is the dreadful wickedness, the heinous sin, the atrocious crime that was committed by Gisippus as my friend, and by me as her lover; that Sophronia secretly became the wife of Titus Quintius! And for this reason you rend and tear him, for this you are loud with threats and hatch plots against him. What more could you indulge in, had he turned her over to a boor, a good-for-nothing, or a lackey? What chains, what dungeons, what scaffoldings would have seemed adequate punishment? But enough now, of all this.

"The thing which I had not yet expected has happened. My father is dead, and I must return to Rome. Thus, in my anxiety to take Sophronia with me, I have disclosed to you what I perhaps should still have concealed. If you are wise, you will gladly bear this parting, for had I intended to cheat and make a mock of you, I could have left her behind, dishonored. God forbid that such infamy should ever harbor in a Roman breast! Sophronia is mine. By the will of the gods, by the might of human laws, by the praiseworthy wisdom of my dear Gi-

sippus and, ay, by my own lovers' cunning—she is my own! It is this very thing you seem foolishly to decry, perhaps deeming yourselves wiser than the gods and mankind in general, by showing your disfavor in two ways exceedingly odious to me: first, in wishing to hold Sophronia, over whom you have no right except insofar as I allow it, and second, by treating Gisippus as an enemy, to whom you ought justly be grateful. I'll not waste time now showing you how ridiculously you are behaving in both instances, but as a friend I say to you, away with your prejudices. Forget your rancors and the grudges you bear me, and give me back Sophronia, that I may peacefully depart as your friend and live as such. For I assure you, if you do otherwise, whether you are content or not with what I have done, I will take Gisippus from you. Then, if I should reach Rome, I will certainly recover the woman who is rightfully mine, no matter how you resent it, and as your relentless enemy I'll give you a taste of what the indignation of a Roman is capable!"

No sooner had Titus had his say, than rising to his feet, his face flaming with wrath, he took Gisippus by the hand, and showing how little he cared for all the people in the temple, walked out shaking his head and fuming with threats.

Those who remained behind, partly won over to countenance his alliance and friendship for the reasons he had given, and partly intimidated by his closing words, finally concurred that it was better to have Titus as a kinsman, since Gisippus had not wished the honor for himself, than to lose Gisippus as a friend and acquire the Roman as an enemy. Accordingly, they went out in search of Titus and told him they were willing that Sophronia should be his, yes, and to have him as a dear kinsman and Gisippus as a good friend. Thus they exchanged friendly courtesies and made good cheer, and after they had gone away, they sent Sophronia back to him. Like the discreet woman she was, she made a virtue of necessity, and quickly transferring to Titus the love she had borne Gisippus, accompanied him to Rome, where she was welcomed with exceeding honor.

Gisippus, in the meantime, remaining behind in Athens, was looked on with disfavor by nearly everyone, and not long after, being implicated in

some civic broils, he was banished from town with those of his household and condemned, poor and wretched, to perpetual exile. Things went from bad to worse. Well-nigh a beggar, he made the best of his way to Rome, to see if Titus still bore any remembrance of him, and there he learned that his former friend was alive and held in high esteem by his fellow-citizens. Gisippus, therefore, discovering where he lived, posted himself before his door and waited until Titus came home. When he saw him, however, he did not dare to make himself known by a single word, so wretched was his state, but simply strove to catch his eye, that Titus, recognizing him, might have him sent for. But Titus passed on. Gisippus, thinking his friend had ignored him, went away, wounded and desperate, especially when he recalled what he had done for him.

Night had already fallen. Gisippus had not eaten anything, and furthermore had no money at all. Without knowing where he was going, and yearning above everything for death, he happened upon a desolate quarter of the city, where, seeing a vast cave, he went in to seek shelter for the night. Upon the naked ground, in his ragged clothes, he sank to sleep, overcome by the stress of long weeping.

Now two rogues, who had gone out on a robbing expedition that night, came to that cave toward daybreak with their plunder, and while they were quarreling about it, the stronger slew the other and made his escape. Gisippus had witnessed the whole scene, and thought, "Here is a way of achieving the death I seek without having to lay hands upon myself." Accordingly, he did not move from the spot until the sergeants of the court, who had heard rumors of the murder, arrived, put Gisippus under arrest and led him none too gently away with them. Upon being brought to trial Gisippus confessed the murder, saying he had not been able to get out of the cave in time, whereupon Marcus Varro, the praetor, ordered him to be crucified, according to the custom of those days.

By some chance, Titus happened to come into the courtroom at that moment, and as he looked into the face of the wretched man, and learned for what reason he had been sentenced to death, he instantly recognized Gisippus. Aghast at the evil days that had fallen upon his former friend, and wonder-

ing at how he had come to Rome, he was desperately eager to come to his aid. But seeing no other way of saving his life except to accuse himself and so clear Gisippus of guilt, he quickly stepped forward and cried, "Marcus Varro, call back the poor man you have sentenced to death, for he is innocent. I sinned enough against the gods in one crime, when I murdered the wretch your guards found this morning, without offending them further with the death of another guiltless man."

Varro was astounded and grieved that all the praetors had heard him. Still, as he could not honorably refuse to carry out what the laws decreed, he had Gisippus summoned back, and in the presence of Titus asked him, "How could you have been so mad as to confess yourself guilty of a crime you never committed, even without having been put to torture, and knowing that you would be placing your life at stake? You declared you were the culprit who killed a man last night, and now here is one who says you did not kill him, but that he did."

Gisippus looked up at the self-accuser and recognized Titus who, he had no doubt, was doing this to save his life out of gratitude for the boon he had once received from him. Weeping with pity, "Varro," he said, "I am the true murderer, and Titus' compassion for my welfare comes too late."

Titus insisted, "Praetor, you see this man is a stranger in our town. He was found unarmed beside the slain man, and it is obvious that his miserable state makes him in love with death. Set him free, then, and inflict the punishment upon me, who have deserved it."

Varro wondered at the determination of the two men. The truth that neither of them was guilty was already dawning upon him, and as he was revolving in his mind some way of releasing them, a notorious scapegrace called Publius Ambustus, a youth known to all the Romans as a scoundrel and a thief, presented himself. He had committed the murder, and therefore knowing that neither of the two men had committed the crime of which each accused himself, he felt such grief softening his heart at their innocence, that moved to exceeding pity, he came before Varro and said:

"Praetor, my fates urge me to solve the difficult argument between these two men, and I don't know

what spirit within me goads and pricks me on to confess my crime to you. Know, then, that neither of these men is guilty of what each stands self-accused. I, and none but I, killed that man toward dawn this morning, and I saw this poor fellow who is here now, lying there asleep as I was dividing the ill-gotten gains with my accomplice. It is not necessary for me to plead on behalf of Titus. His blameless conduct is too well known for him to be thought capable of such a crime. Set them free, therefore, and give me the punishment which the laws demand."

By this time Octavianus had heard of the strange event. Calling for the three to appear before him, he questioned them individually upon the reasons that impelled each to take the blame upon himself. One by one, they told him. The first two he acquitted for their innocence, and the third, too, he forgave for their sake.

Titus, after rebuking Gisippus for his lack of faith and his diffidence, welcomed him with joy and happiness and took him to his home, where Sophronia received him like a brother, weeping over his lot for pity. Nursing him tenderly and furnishing him with clothes, they brought him back to a state befitting his worth and rank, when Titus shared everything he had in treasures and estates with him, and gave him in marriage a young sister of his called Fulvia. Then, "Gisippus," he said, "it is for you now to choose whether you will stay here with me, or go back to Achaia with my gifts."

Exile and banishment from his native land on the one hand, and the love he bore the grateful friendship of Titus on the other, pleaded with Gisippus, and he agreed to become a Roman. And so he settled down in Rome, where he with his Fulvia and Titus with his Sophronia lived happily for many years, all in the same house, their friendship becoming deeper and closer, if that were possible, with every passing day.

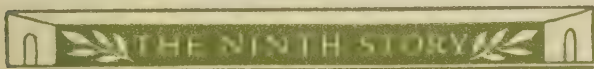
Most holy is the virtue of friendship. Not only is it deserving of special esteem, but it should be praised forever as the prudent mother of generosity and honesty, the sister of gratitude and charity, and the enemy of hatred and avarice. It never waits to be solicited, but is always ready to do virtuously to others what it would have done unto itself. These days its divine manifestations are seldom to be met

with in two individuals at once—be it said to the shame of human greed, which, in its own self-seeking, has relegated it in eternal banishment to the furthest corners of the earth.

What love, what wealth, what ties of blood could have caused Gisippus to feel in his own heart the passion, tears and sighs of Titus to such an extent as to make him surrender to him the beautiful, charming bride he himself loved? What, I say, if not friendship? What laws, what threats, what terrors could have kept the lusty arms of Gisippus from encircling the lovely girl in secluded places, in the dark, yes, in his very bed, she herself, perhaps, inviting him—what, if not friendship? What glories, what merits, what advancements could have made Gisippus indifferent to the loss of his own kith and kin and Sophronia's people, to the indecent murmurs of the populace, to their mockery and insults—all to gratify his friend—tell me, what, if not friendship?

Then again, what, if not friendship could have made Titus so ready to procure his own death, to deliver Gisippus from the crucifixion he sought, when without any dishonor to himself he could have closed his eyes to the other's peril? What could have impelled Titus to share his vast patrimony unhesitatingly with Gisippus, from whom fate had filched all—what, if not friendship? And last, but not least, what if not friendship could have made Titus so ready to grant his own sister to Gisippus, when he saw him so miserable and in such dire need?

Let mortals desire multitudes of friends, hosts of brothers and countless children; let them increase the number of their servants by purchasing their services. They do not consider that every one of these, no matter what his condition, is sure to be more concerned with the least little danger threatening his own safety, than solicitous to protect his father, or his brother or his master from a mighty peril. Could this be said of friendship? Never!



SALADIN, traveling incognito, enjoys the hospitality of Torello. Soon a crusade is undertaken and Torello sets out upon it, enjoining his wife not to marry again until a year is past. He is captured by the Saracens, and because of his ex-

cellence in training hawks, comes to the notice of Saladin who recognizes him, makes himself known, and loads him with honors. Torello suddenly falls sick, and by virtue of magic arts is transported overnight to Pavia, where during the ceremony of his wife's remarriage she knows him and they both go home together.

FILOMENA was silent. When the magnificent gratitude of Titus had been extolled by the whole company, the king, leaving Dioneo his privilege of telling the last story, began:

Charming ladies, Filomena's discourse of friendship contains a world of truth, and it was with good reason she complained of how little it is appreciated by mankind nowadays. Indeed, if we were here to correct the shortcomings of the world, or even to censure them, I'd second her words by a lengthy sermon. But since our purpose is quite a different one, I'd like very much to tell you a rather long but interesting story concerning an act of generosity on the part of Saladin. Thus, if we cannot gain friends because of our errors, we can at least, as you will see by my story, take pleasure in serving, so that perhaps at some future time that service may receive the reward that is its due.

According to what some people maintain, during the reign of Emperor Frederick the First, the Christians proposed to undertake another crusade to regain the Holy Land. News of it reached the ears of Saladin, a brave and noble monarch who was at the time Sultan of Babylon, and the better to make provisions against the incursion, he resolved to see for himself what preparations the Christians were making. Thereupon, after settling his administration in Egypt, he gave his people to understand that he was going on a pilgrimage, but instead, set out on his journey disguised as a merchant, accompanied by only two of his foremost and wisest counselors and three lackeys. So they traveled through many Christian countries.

Toward dusk one evening, as they were riding through Lombardy on the road between Milan and Pavia, to get across the mountains before night overtook them, they met a gentleman called Torello d'Istria, of the latter town, who was traveling with his servants, hounds and falcons toward a handsome country-home he possessed, above the Tesino. The moment he caught sight of Saladin and his attend-

ants, he knew they were gentlemen and strangers in those parts, so that when the Sultan asked one of his servants how far they still were from Pavia and whether he and his men were still in time to reach it before the gates were closed, Torello did not give the fellow time to reply but answered, "Gentlemen, you'll not get to Pavia to-night in time to enter it."

"Can you please tell us, then, where we may put up for the night," asked Saladin, "for as you see, we are strangers here?"

"With pleasure, sir," replied Torello. "I was just thinking of sending one of my men on an errand to the neighborhood of Pavia. I'll have him accompany you and he will conduct you to a place where you will be comfortably lodged."

Accordingly, drawing near the most discreet of his attendants, he instructed him what to do and sent him to keep the strangers company, while he himself hastened to his house, arranged for the best possible supper that was to be procured, and ordered the tables to be set in one of his gardens. This accomplished, he stood at the door to await his guests' arrival.

In the meantime, the servant, engaging the gentlemen in conversation, led them, without their knowing it, through various roundabout ways to his master's house, where Torello himself came to greet them, smiling, "Gentlemen, you are heartily welcome!"

Saladin, a shrewd reader of men, knew instantly that their host had feared that they might not have accepted his invitation if he had proffered it at their first meeting, and had thus conducted them skilfully to his house, where they could not refuse to spend the night with him. Greeting him in turn he said, "Sir, if one could complain of gentlemanly behavior, we should have good reason to complain of you. I am not speaking of your taking us somewhat out of our way; but here, without your being beholden to us except for a mere greeting, you have placed us in a position to accept, willy-nilly, the exemplary hospitality you are showing us."

At that Torello, an intelligent, well-spoken man, replied, "Gentlemen, what you are receiving from us is but poor accommodation, if we were to take into consideration what you really deserve, to judge by your appearances. But you must believe me when I say that it would not have been possible for you to

find any suitable lodging-place outside of Pavia. Don't be annoyed, then, if you've been taken a little out of your way to gain less discomfort."

While he was speaking his servants had come to help the strangers dismount, and then took care of their horses. Then Torello, leading the three gentlemen to the suite he had prepared for them, had them remove their riding-boots and refresh themselves with draughts of coolest wines, as he engaged them in pleasant talk until the hour for supper.

Now Saladin, as well as his two attendants and the lackeys were acquainted with Latin, and they could easily understand what was said to them while making themselves understood. Conversing with Torello, they thought him the most pleasant, courteous and agreeable speaker of any man they had ever met, while on his part he was sure they must be magnificent gentlemen of far greater rank than he had at first suspected. He was embarrassed at the thought, and inwardly regretted that he had not been able to honor them that night with other guests to keep them company and a more sumptuous feast. "But I'll make up for it to-morrow," he comforted himself.

After sending one of his servants with instructions to his wife, a most prudent and noble-hearted woman who was then at Pavia, hard by, where no gates were ever shut or barred, he took the gentlemen to his garden and courteously asked them who they were.

"We are Cyprian merchants," Saladin answered him, "on our way to Paris for some business matters of ours."

"If only our country could boast of such gentlemen as Cyprus does of merchants!" Torello exclaimed.

Such conversation, and more in the same strain engaged them until supper-time, when Torello led them to the tables and left them to their own devices. It was an excellent and well-served supper, for one prepared without notice. When it was over and the tables were cleared, Torello, knowing his guests must be fatigued from their journey, put them up in fine, comfortable beds and himself retired.

The attendant who had been despatched to Pavia accomplished his errand with Torello's wife, who, with a spirit not womanly but queenly, collected as

many of her husband's friends and servants as she could muster and arranged everything for a sumptuous feast. Then, sending retainers with torches to invite the town's noblest citizens to the banquet, she brought out her best cloths and tapestries and vairs, and followed her husband's orders to the letter.

The following day, when the stranger gentlemen had risen, Torello, mounting his horse in their company, sent for his falcons, and leading his guests to a nearby ford, showed them how his birds flew. Later, when Saladin asked him for someone to conduct him and his party to the best hostelry in Pavia, Torello answered, "I shall escort you myself, as I have to go there anyway."

They believed him, and were pleased, and together they set out on their way, the strangers thinking they were bound for Pavia's best inn. Toward nine o'clock they came into the town. Torello brought them to his house, and at least fifty of the city's most notable citizens were already there to welcome the strangers and came forward to assist them from their horses. Saladin and his attendants knew in a trice how matters stood, and said, "Torello! Torello! This is not what we had asked you for. You went through enough trouble for us last night—much more than we should have wished—and you could easily have let us go our way to-day."

"Gentlemen," replied Torello, "for all I did last night I am beholden to luck more than to you, for it was luck that brought you upon that road at an hour when you had no choice but to come to my humble house. But for to-day's visit I shall be your debtor, as well as all these gentlemen you see about you. If you think you can justly deny them the honor of being their guests, you are at liberty to do so, if you wish."

Saladin and his companions were persuaded by the argument and dismounted. Thereupon, the gentlemen of the town gave them a glad welcome, escorted them to the chambers that had been richly adorned to receive them, and after having had them remove their traveling-clothes, refreshed them with cooling drinks and brought them into the banquet-hall, which was magnificently decked in their honor. Water was passed around for the ablutions and the guests took their places at the tables, where, in grand and noble order, they were served with such bounty

and largesse, that if the emperor himself had come, he could not have been shown greater honor. Even Saladin and his companions, in spite of their being noble lords and accustomed to splendor, could not but marvel at the lavishness, all the more astonishing when they considered Torello was no great lord but a citizen.

At last when the dinner was over and the tables cleared, they passed the time talking of sundry things; but as the heat of the afternoon was intense, the gentlemen of Pavia, at Torello's suggestion went to take their siesta, and he remained alone with his three guests.

There was no cherished thing in his possession that he did not wish them to see, therefore, leading them into a room apart, Torello sent for his wife to come to him.

She was a beautiful woman, tall and stately of figure, clothed in a rich and splendid gown. Courteously she entered with her two little sons, fair as angels, on either side of her, and came before the guests with a gracious greeting. They rose at her appearance, and received her with respect, and showing her to a seat among them, complimented her on her lovely children. They conversed pleasantly for some time, when, at her husband's withdrawal, she asked them civilly, "May I ask where you come from and where you are going?"

They gave her the answer they had given Torello, at which the lady said with charming grace, "I can see that my womanly forethought will prove useful. I beseech you, as a special grace, do not reject or scorn the modest gift I shall send for. Accept it, I pray you, with the understanding that women, in the simpleness of their hearts, make only simple gifts; therefore, do not consider the gift, but the spirit in which it is given."

At that she called for two robes of honor for each man—one lined with silk, and the other with vair. No mere townsman's clothes were they, nor merchants' either, but fit for great lords. Besides these robes, she also presented them with three shirts of sendal and breeches of fine linen.

"Take them," she said, "for I have also provided my husband with similar garments. As for the other things, trifling though they are, you may still find them welcome, considering the fact that you are

traveling and far from your women, and have still a long way to go. Moreover, merchants are neat men, and careful of their appearance."

The three men were filled with wonder, and saw clearly that Torello did not wish to leave a single gracious gesture unaccomplished. When they perceived the magnificence of the robes, however, which were not at all for simple merchants, they were afraid he had perhaps penetrated their disguise, and one of them said to the lady:

"Madam, these are very rich gifts, not to be lightly taken. Truly, we should scarcely have dared accept them, if your prayers, which we cannot find it in ourselves to deny, had not compelled us."

By this time Torello had returned, whereupon the lady, commending the strangers to God, took leave of them and set about providing their servants with such changes of raiment as suited their station. After many prayers, Torello succeeded in having the strangers remain his guests the rest of the day. They took their siesta, and then dressing themselves in their robes, they rode about the town until supper-time. They were magnificently served, amid a host of honorable companions, and then, at the proper time, they retired to rest.

At daybreak the following morning they arose, to find three sturdy, powerful steeds awaiting them in place of their tired horses, as well as fresh, robust mounts for their servants. Saladin, at this new token of generosity, turned to his companions and said, "By heaven, there never was a more accomplished, courteous or noble gentleman than this! Truly, if Christian kings are as kingly as this man is a gentleman, I'm afraid the Sultan of Babylon is no match for a single one of them, not to speak of all those who are getting ready to fall upon him!"

Knowing full well that it would have been bootless for them to refuse Torello's new kindness, they thanked him very graciously and took to horse. For many miles beyond the town, Torello and a number of his companions escorted them. At last Saladin, who had taken a great fancy to his host and was loth to part from him, though his need impelled him to journey on, urged him to turn back. Much against his will, Torello, who found the parting difficult, said,

"Gentlemen, I shall obey you, since it is your

wish. But I'll tell you one thing, I don't know who you are, and I shall not insist on knowing any more than it is your pleasure to tell me. But whoever you may be, you will never make me believe you are only merchants. Farewell, then, and the Lord keep you."

Saladin had already said good-bye to all of Torello's friends and now turned to him. "Torello," he said, "perhaps it may happen that some day we'll be in a position to show you some of our merchandise, so that we may make you believe us. But now, God be with you."

So he went away with his attendants, swearing a solemn oath that if death spared him and the expected war did not wreck his kingdom, he would show Torello no less honor than he had received. He spoke much of him with his companions, and of his charming lady, and of the many kindnesses and courtesies the gentleman had shown them, finding no words to praise him sufficiently.

Finally, after he had visited all the western countries, not without stress and fatigue, he took ship and returned to Alexandria where, fully cognizant of the Christians' plans, he prepared his kingdom for defense.

Torello, on his part, went back to Pavia, where for a long time he racked his brains wondering who the three strangers could have been, without ever attaining, or even approaching the truth.

Meanwhile, the time for the crusade drew near, and great were the preparations made for it throughout the Christian world. Torello, too, in spite of his wife's prayers and tears was firmly determined to go on it. Indeed, he arranged all his affairs for the departure, and when he was about to mount his horse, he said to his wife, whom he loved with a high and noble love:

"As you see, my dear, I am going on this crusade for the honor of my body and the welfare of my soul. I leave all we have, our goods and our honor in your keeping. As I am sure of going, but not so sure of coming back, because of a thousand hazards that may come between, I have one favor to ask of you. No matter what happens, whether or not you have definite word that I'm alive or dead, wait for me a year, a month and a day from this of my departure, before you marry again."

The good lady was choked with sobs and answered, "O Torello, I don't know how I can ever bear the sorrow you leave me with your going! But if I should survive it and anything should happen to you, rest assured that I shall live and die the wife of Torello and his beloved memory."

"I know, dear wife, that if it rested with you, all that you promise would surely be," said Torello. "But you are young and beautiful and of good family, and your great virtues are everywhere recognized. I have no doubt, therefore, that if there were the least suspicion of my death, many gentlemen of rank would ask your brothers and your family for your hand. Then, no matter how you wished to rid yourself of their suits, you could not do so, and you would be obliged to give in to their demands. That is why I am asking you to wait for me just so long and no longer."

"I shall endeavor to do my best in what I said, Torello," she answered, "and should I be obliged to act otherwise, I shall obey your request without fail—pray God He may never bring you or me to such a pass!"

Weeping, she threw her arms about his neck; then, drawing a ring from her finger, she gave it to him, saying, "If I should die before I see you again, let this remind you of me whenever you look at it."

He took it from her, and mounting his horse, bade all his friends farewell. So he set out on his journey. At Genoa, where he arrived with his contingent, he embarked on a galley. In a short time he was at Acre to join another army of crusaders, among whom, almost immediately, great sickness trailed disastrous mortality in its wake. At this juncture, whether through Saladin's tactics or his good luck, almost all the surviving Christians were made captive, scattered throughout his towns and confined in the prisons. Among them, Torello was seized and brought a captive to Alexandria. Nobody knew him there, nor did he wish to make himself known, and as his great need constrained him, he devoted his time to training falcons, an art at which he was a master. His skill was brought to the attention of Saladin; presently the monarch ordered him to be released and appointed him his falconer.

As it was, neither of the two recognized the other, and Saladin knew him by no other name than *the*

Christian. Torello, on his part, had no mind but for Pavia, and many times had sought, without success, to make his escape. One day, when some Genoese gentlemen had come as envoys to Saladin to broach the ransoming of some fellow-citizens who were being held captive, Torello thought of letting his wife know of his condition and that he was alive, and hence that she should wait for him, as he would fly to her as soon as he could. He did as he planned, and approaching one of the ambassadors whom he knew, he earnestly entreated him before his departure, to deliver the letter he had written into the hands of his uncle, the abbot of the church of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro.

Once, during this state of affairs, while Saladin was talking about his birds with Torello, the falconer smiled in a way peculiar to him, which the Sultan had remarked in his house at Pavia. Immediately, he thought of his courteous host, and looking at Torello narrowly, seemed to recognize him. Forgetting about his falcons, he said, "Tell me, Christian, what country do you come from in the West?"

"My lord, I am a Lombard," he replied, "and I come from a city called Pavia. I am a poor man, of low degree."

At his words Saladin, certain that his supposition was well-founded, said happily to himself, "God has been good and granted me an opportunity to show this man how much I appreciated his courtesy."

He did not say a word to Torello himself, but ordering all his robes and gowns to be spread in a room of the palace, led him there.

"Look, Christian," he said, "tell me if there is any robe here that you've seen before."

Torello looked about, and saw those which his wife had given Saladin. He thought it out of the question for them to be the very gowns; nevertheless, he said, "My lord, I don't know any of these garments, though I admit that those two over there look like certain robes with which I was fitted long ago, together with three merchants who happened to come to my house."

Saladin could no longer contain his joy, and embracing him tenderly, "You are Torello d'Istria," he said, "and I am one of those three merchants to

whom your wife gave these robes. The time has come for me to show you my merchandise, as I predicted when I took leave of you."

Joy and embarrassment took possession of Torello at the revelation—joy at the thought that he had entertained such a guest, and embarrassment because it seemed to him he had shown him but meager hospitality. But Saladin broke into his meditation saying, "Since God has sent you here to me, Torello, you are master henceforth and not I."

Great was their joy at having found each other. Saladin soon dressed him in a robe of honor, and presenting him to his greatest lords, said to them, praising his excellence, "All of you, who cherish my favor, honor my friend as you would honor me."

His wishes were scrupulously carried out, especially by the two nobles whom Torello had entertained with the Sultan at his house.

This sudden glorious good fortune drove all pre-occupations about Pavia out of Torello's mind, all the more since he firmly believed that his letters had by this time reached his uncle.

Now on the day the Christians had been captured by Saladin, there had perished in the camp, rather in the crusading army, a Provençal knight of little note called Torello de Dignes, and he had been buried. As Torello d'Istria had gained renown throughout the army for his nobility of character, it so happened that when a crusader heard, "Torello is dead," he immediately thought the Italian had met his doom and not the knight of Dignes. The eventual disaster of their capture did not allow them to learn the truth, so that many Italians returned with the news, two of them even going so far as to declare that they had seen his corpse and been present at the burial.

How great and infinite was the grief into which this news plunged Torello's friends and kin, indeed, all who knew him, would be a long task to describe—especially the sorrow and grief and tears of his lady, who mourned and lamented his loss continually. When, after some months, her grief had somewhat abated, she began to be wooed by the noblest gentlemen of Lombardy, and her brothers, with the rest of her family, gave her no peace as they urged her to marry again. She had repeatedly refused them, bursting into uncontrollable weeping, but at last she

was compelled to give in to their pleas, though on condition that she would not be wedded until the time stipulated by Torello had expired.

While, in Pavia, the good lady was in this plight and the day set for her remarriage was perhaps some eight days removed, Torello met a man in Alexandria whom he had seen going aboard the galley that was taking the envoys to Genoa. Sending for him, he asked him what sort of passage they had had, and when they had reached Genoa.

"It was a mighty bad trip, sir, as I learned in Crete where I got off," he said, "for as the ship was neighboring Sicily, there arose a violent north wind that dashed her on the Barbary shoals. Not a man escaped alive, sir, and two of my brothers among others were drowned."

Torello, crediting the man's words, which were alas! too true, and remembering that in a few days the period of time he had set his wife would expire, was well-nigh certain that since nobody in Pavia could have known anything of his circumstances, she must by this time have remarried. The thought drove him to such despair that he could neither eat nor sleep, and taking to his bed resolved to have done with life.

On learning of this, Saladin, who dearly loved him, came to his bedside. When, after many fervent entreaties, he discovered the cause of his friend's despair and illness, he reproached him for not having told him of it sooner.

"Come, cheer up," he encouraged him, for "if you do as I say, I'll get you to Pavia in time, upon my word." Then he told him how he would contrive it.

Torello had faith in what Saladin told him. Moreover, he had often heard it said that what he suggested was possible and had been done many times before. He plucked up his spirits, therefore, and besought Saladin to do what he intended as soon as possible.

The Sultan, calling one of his magicians, whose art he had already had occasion to put to the test, commanded him to devise a way by means of which Torello might be transported from Alexandria to Pavia in a single night, as he lay in bed.

"That I shall do, sire," answered the magician, "but for his comfort, I must first put him to sleep."

After this had been arranged, the Sultan rejoined Torello, and on discovering that he had made up his mind either to be in Pavia at the stated time if there were any possibility of doing so, or, if not, to give up the ghost, he said to him:

"Torello, far be it from me, God knows, to blame you in the least for loving your wife as dearly as you do, and for not wanting to lose her to another man. Of all women I've ever seen, she is the one whose sweetness and charm and behavior—not to speak of beauty, which, after all, is a transient bloom—seem to me most worthy of being commended and cherished. I should have considered it a great privilege, since Fortune was so good as to bring you here, for us both to have lived the span of our mortal lives as joint rulers of my kingdom; or, if this divine boon was not intended for me, and you were resolved either to return to Pavia in time, or else to pine away, I could have wished with all my heart that you had at least told me about it early enough, so that I might have sent you home with all the pomp and grandeur and equipage that your worth demands. But since that has not been vouchsafed me and you are determined to go back as soon as may be, I shall send you there as best I can, in the way I described."

Then said Torello, "My lord, even without verbal assurances, your deeds have given me sufficient proof of your goodwill, which I never deserved to such a supreme degree, and though you had not expressed your feelings in the matter, I should have lived and died fully cognizant of what they are. But I am firm in the decision I have taken, therefore I beg you do what you suggest as soon as you can, for to-morrow is the last day that I am to be expected."

"That I will do, and without fail," Saladin assured him.

That day (for he expected to have him transported the coming night), Saladin had a rich, handsome bed of mattresses made according to their fashion, of velvet and cloth of gold, set up in a hall of the palace, and decked with a coverlet embroidered in geometric designs, strewn with large pearls and costly gems—which were later kept as a priceless treasure here in Italy. Two pillows, suitable for such a bed, added the final touch.

When the couch was ready, Saladin had Torello, who had recovered his health and spirits,

clothed like a Saracen in a most gorgeous robe, the richest and most magnificent imaginable, and his head swathed in a long turban. As it was already late, Saladin, with many of his lords, came to Torello's room, and sitting beside him said, the tears welling in his eyes:

"Torello, the hour approaches when we must part. As I may not come with you nor send anyone to keep you company, since the nature of your voyage will not allow it, I must bid you farewell here in this room, and that is why I have come. But before I wish you godspeed, I beseech you, by that tie of love and friendship that binds us, think of me. Perhaps some day, before we have done with life and you have taken care of your duties in Lombardy, you may come to visit me, once only, so that when my eyes are again rejoiced at the sight of you, I may make up for the deficiencies that are now made necessary by your haste. Until that time, however, I trust it will not be too much trouble for you to write to me and ask of me whatever you care to have, for beyond a doubt there is no man alive for whom I would more willingly do my best."

Torello could not restrain his tears. Emotion choked his voice, and very briefly he answered, "Never, my lord, can I forget your many kindnesses and your nobility," adding that he would not fail to do his every wish at the earliest opportunity. Affectionately, Saladin embraced and kissed him. "God be with you," he murmured through his tears, and withdrew from the chamber. One by one the other lords bade Torello farewell and then entered the great hall with Saladin, where the couch had been made ready.

It was already quite late, and the magician was impatient for them to make haste. At that point, a physician came into Torello's room with a beverage which, he said, would strengthen him for the journey. "Drink it," he said. Torello obeyed him, and before long he had sunk into a deep sleep, when, at Saladin's orders, he was borne into the great hall and laid upon the couch. A large, beautiful crown of great price was placed there, too, inscribed with such sentiments as made it manifest that it had been sent as a gift to Torello's wife. Furthermore, Saladin slipped on the sleeping man's finger a ring of inestimable value, set with a carbuncle of such lustre

that it glowed like a flaming torch, and girt him with a sword whose chasing alone could not easily have been appraised. Then he had a brooch set on his breast, of pearls the like of which were never seen, and other precious stones of rarest varieties. On either side of him, two massive basins of gold were placed, heaped with gold coins, and all about him were strewn nets of pearls, and rings, and girdles and other treasures that were too many to enumerate.

When everything was ready Saladin kissed his friend once more, and turning to the magician, "Proceed," he said. Before his very eyes the couch, with Torello and everything upon it, was whisked away, and the Sultan remained behind, talking about the worthy man with his lords.

At last, Torello was transported to Pavia and set down, couch, jewels and all in the church of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro, as he had requested. He was still sound asleep when the matin-bells began to ring and the sacristan came into the church with a light in his hand. Upon suddenly seeing before him the magnificent couch, he was not only astounded but terrified, and took to his heels as fast as he could. The abbot and the monks with him, who saw the sacristan's strange behavior, wondered, and said, "What's the matter? Why are you running?" He told them what he had seen. "Fie, you're no child," said the abbot, "and you're not such a novice in the church as to be so easily terrified. Come, let's go and see who has tried to scare you."

Torches were kindled, by the light of which the abbot and his monks went into the church, where they beheld the rich and splendid couch, with the man lying there asleep. As they stood by, wondering and frightened, gaping at the wonderful jewels and not daring to draw a step nearer the bed, Torello suddenly awoke, as the effect of the drug had been dissipated, and sighed deeply. That was all the monks needed. Abbot and all, they dashed away in terror, crying, "God help us! God help us!"

Torello opened his eyes, and as he looked about him, saw to his great joy that he was indeed where he had requested Saladin to have him brought. He sat up and examined the treasures that were scattered about him more closely; if he had known Saladin's magnificence before, the greatness of it was now redoubled in his estimation.

When he saw the monks fleeing from him, he guessed the cause of their fright, and without budging from his place, he called the abbot by his name. "Don't be afraid, uncle," he said, encouraging him, "it's I, Torello, your nephew."

The abbot was even more frightened at this, since for many months he had believed him dead. Still, on hearing himself called, and being further reassured by sound arguments, he crossed himself and drew near the couch.

"How are you, good father?" Torello greeted him. "And what's there to be afraid of? I'm hale and hearty, thank the Lord, and I've just returned from across the seas."

The abbot, after looking at him a while, recognized him in spite of his long beard and Saracen garb. Confidence returned to him, and taking Torello by the hand, "My son," he said, "you are indeed welcome home. But you must not wonder at our terror," he continued, "for there's not a soul here who doesn't firmly believe you to be dead. Indeed, I must tell you that Adalieta, your wife, is to be married again, much against her will, to be sure, intimidated by the threats and importunities of her people. This very day she is to go to her new husband, and the feast is already set, with everything else that pertains to a wedding."

Torello rose from his couch. He greeted the abbot and the monks with exceeding joy. "But do not tell anyone I have come back," he enjoined them, "until I have taken care of a certain matter."

After the precious jewels had been hidden in a safe place, he told his uncle the story of his adventures up to that point, which made the good man rejoice with him at his stroke of fortune. Together they offered prayers of thanksgiving to the Lord, after which Torello said, "Who is to be my wife's new husband?"

The abbot gave him the name.

"Before anybody learns I have come back," said Torello, "I'd like to see how my wife feels about this new marriage. I know it is not the usual thing for men of your dignity to go to such banquets, but for my sake, uncle, I'd like you to manage to have us both invited."

"Very well, my son," replied the abbot, and early in the morning he sent a messenger to the

bridegroom-to-be with the request that he be invited to the wedding with a friend of his. The groom replied that he would be delighted to receive them.

Well, toward dinner-time, Torello, still dressed in his foreign costume, went with his uncle to the bridegroom's house. Great was the wonderment of all who saw him, but no one knew him for Torello; moreover, the abbot informed everyone that he was a Saracen noble on a mission for the Sultan to the King of France.

When the seats were assigned at table, he was placed opposite his wife, upon whom he gazed with the greatest joy in the world; so far as he could discern, she looked unwilling and sad at the prospect of this marriage. Adalieta, too, sometimes looked in his direction, not that she knew him, for his long beard and foreign costume and the assurance that her husband was dead, drove all such notions from her head.

At last, when Torello thought the opportune moment had come for him to discover whether she still bore him in mind, he called to him the page who served her, and taking the ring she had given him at their parting, said, "Tell the bride this for me. It is the custom of the land I come from, that when a stranger like me is a guest at the table of a newly-married bride like herself, she sends him the bowl out of which she drinks, brimful of wine, as a sign that she is glad of his presence. Then, after the stranger has drunk as much as he wishes, he covers the bowl again, and the bride drinks the rest of the wine."

The boy did as he was told. Adalieta, like the virtuous and prudent woman she was, thinking the stranger some great lord, ordered the massive golden bowl before her to be washed and filled with wine, and to show him that he was welcome at her feast, had it brought to him. In the meantime Torello held the ring in his mouth, and as he drank, skilfully let it fall into the cup unobserved, leaving very little wine at the bottom. He then covered the bowl again and sent it back to Adalieta.

Upon uncovering it and bringing it to her lips in order to drink the remaining wine and so fulfil the rest of the ceremony, she saw the ring and examined it a moment without saying a word. At last she recognized it as the one she had given her hus-

band on his departure. Taking it out, she gazed intently upon the man she had thought a stranger, and knew him at once. Then, as if she had lost control of her senses, she flung down the table before her, crying, "It is my husband! It is indeed my Torello!"

Dashing toward the board at which he was seated, she leaned forward as far as she could, unmindful of her gown or anything that lay upon the table, and clasped him close in her embrace. Nothing, neither the words nor the efforts of the guests could tear her away, until Torello himself told her to refrain for a while, as she would have plenty of time to embrace him to her heart's content.

She loosed her clasp and rose. By this time, the wedding-feast was in turmoil, though in a way merrier than ever for the return of so worthy a gentleman. At Torello's request, the guests subsided to silence, whereupon he related to them his adventures from the day of his departure up to that moment, saying in conclusion to the gentleman who was to have married Adalieta, "I trust, my friend, since I've come back alive, that you will not take it ill if I reclaim my wife whom you would have married, believing me dead."

Although the groom felt rather humiliated, he answered freely and amicably, "Torello, you are the master of what is yours, and free to do with it what you think best."

Adalieta, taking off the bridal-wreath and the wedding-ring that had been given her by her new groom, put on her finger the ring she had taken from the cup and set upon her head the crown the Sultan had sent her. Together she and Torello left the house, and followed by the wedding-procession went to their own, where with a long and happy feast they rejoiced the friends and kin, indeed, all the townsfolk who had mourned Torello for dead, and now looked upon his return as nothing short of miraculous.

Torello gave some of his precious gems to the disappointed groom who had defrayed the expenses of the wedding-feast, some to the abbot, and many others to his friends. To Saladin, whose friend and humble servitor he always deemed himself, he sent many messages, telling him of his happy return to his native land, where he lived for ever afterwards

with his lady, exercising his magnificent generosity more than ever.

So ended the troubles of Torello and his dear Adalieta, and such was the reward of their cheerful and ready courtesy. There are many who, having the means, exert themselves to generosity, but they do it with such ill-grace that they make their favors cost more than they're worth. Hence, if no honor reverts to them, it is not for them or anyone else to wonder at it.



THE Marquis of Saluzzo, urged into matrimony by the importunities of his subjects, but resolved to choose his wife for himself, marries Griselda, a peasant's daughter, and has two children by her, both of whom he pretends to have put to death. Then, giving Griselda to understand that he has tired of her and married again, he brings his daughter home as though she were his new wife, and turns Griselda out in her shift. But when he finds that she has been constant in the stress of all her suffering, he takes her home again, shows her their children already grown, and loves her more than ever, he and his subjects honoring her from then on as their lady.

WHEN the king's long story, which apparently had been well liked by everyone, had reached its close, Dioneo said with a laugh, "The simple fellow who tried to hoist down the ghost's stiff tail that night wouldn't have given a farthing for all the praise you shower on Torello." Then, knowing that he was the only one left to tell his story, he began:

Well, my dear gentle ladies, from what I've been able to gather, all this day has been devoted to kings and sultans and such grand people. Now I don't care to stray too far from your topic, so I shall tell you about a marquis. It is no magnificent deed I am going to relate, but a mad piece of stupidity, which, though resulting in much good so far as he was concerned, I'd warn you against imitating, for it was indeed a great shame that he should have derived any benefit from it.

A long time ago, the heir to the house of the lords of Saluzzo was a young man by the name of Gualtieri, who, since he had neither wife nor children, used to devote his time to nothing but hawk-

ing and hunting, without a care in the world about marrying or raising heirs—which, by the way, showed him to have been a mighty clever fellow. His subjects, however, were not at all pleased with this state of affairs, and many times they importuned him to marry so that he wouldn't remain without an heir to succeed him, or they without a ruler. Indeed, they even offered to find him a damsel of such exalted rank and noble parentage, that he could not but be eminently satisfied and entertain the highest expectations of her.

"My friends," Gualtieri answered, "you are forcing me into a thing I had made up my mind never to undertake, considering what a task it is to find a woman entirely suited to one's temperament. Just see how many examples there are of domestic infelicity, and how hard is the lot of the man who has stumbled upon an uncongenial mate! When you argue that from the ways of the parents you can know the daughters, and thence deduce that you can give me a wife with whom I shall be pleased, it is arrant nonsense. By what art can you know their fathers, or learn the secrets of their mothers? Even if you did avail to know them, daughters are often quite different from their fathers and mothers. Still, since you are pleased to bind me in these fetters, I am willing to satisfy you. But as I wish to have no one to blame but myself if things should go wrong, I will be the chooser of my wife, warning you that if you do not respect the woman of my choice as your lady, no matter who she may be, you will experience, to your great disadvantage, how unpleasant it was for me to have married at your insistence but against my will."

"We'll agree to anything provided you marry," the worthy men replied.

Now for a long time Gualtieri had been favorably impressed by the ways of a poor country-girl who lived in a hamlet close to his estate. Moreover, he found her to be very beautiful, and so thought to himself that with a girl like her, he could live a fairly peaceable life. Accordingly, without searching any farther, he resolved to have her as his wife, and calling her father, a very poor, humble fellow, arranged with him about the marriage. That settled, Gualtieri, collecting his friends from the whole countryside, thus addressed them:

"Friends, for a long time you have desired me to marry, and I am disposed to consent, more to gratify you than for any wish I have to take a wife. You recall the promise you made me—that you would be satisfied with any woman I chose, whoever she might be, and that you would show her the respect due your lady. The time has come for me to abide by my promise, and I expect you to do likewise. In a hamlet near by, I found a young girl after my own heart. It is this girl I intend to marry in a few days and bring to my house as my lady. It is for you now to make the wedding-feast as splendid as possible, and to welcome your mistress with due honor, so that I may have as much reason to be satisfied with your side of the bargain, as you have to be pleased with mine."

The honest people joyfully declared themselves well content, and assured him that whoever the wife of his choice might be, they would look upon her as their liege-lady and respect her as such in everything. Thereupon, they began to make preparations for a splendid feast and a joyous celebration, Gualtieri with the rest of them. Magnificent was the banquet he planned, and many were the friends and kin, as well as guests from the country round about, whom he invited, gentlefolk and others. More than that, he had a number of rich and elegant gowns cut to the measure of a young woman who seemed to have the same proportions as the girl he was to marry, and prepared girdles, rings, a beautiful bridal-wreath and everything else that a bride required.

On the morning set for the wedding, Gualtieri mounted his horse, together with the gentlemen who had come there to attend him, and after seeing that everything was as should be, he said, "Gentlemen, it is time to bring the bride home."

Accordingly, he rode with his company to the village, where, as he came to the house of the girl's father, he met her hastening with the water she had fetched from the fountain, so that she might go with the other women to see Gualtieri's bride as she passed by.

"Griselda," he called her by name. "Griselda, where is your father?"

Shyly she answered, "He is in the house, sir."

Gualtieri dismounted. "Wait for me," he said to his retinue, and entered the little hovel alone, where he found Giannucolo, the girl's father.

"I have come to marry Griselda," he said to him, "but first I would like to know something from her lips in your presence."

Then turning to her, he asked whether, if he took her to wife, she would do her utmost to please him, and not be angry with anything he said or did, and whether she would always be obedient to him, and many another thing to the same purport. To each one Griselda answered, "Yes."

Thereupon Gualtieri, taking her by the hand, led her out of the house, and before his retainers and many onlookers, bade her strip naked. "Bring hither the clothes I had made," he said to his attendants. In these new garments he had her quickly clothed, and shoes put on her feet, and upon her hair, rumbled as it was, the bridal crown was laid. Then, while everyone was gazing upon everything in awe, "Gentlemen," he said, "this is the wife I have chosen for myself, if she will have me."

Turning to her, standing there blushing and bewildered, "Griselda," he said, "will you take me to your lawful husband?"

"Yes, my lord," she said.

"And I will take you to my lawful wife," he added. And so, in the presence of all, he married her.

The ceremony over, he lifted her on a palfrey and with an honorable following brought her home, where the wedding was celebrated with as much splendor and magnificence as if he had married the daughter of the king of France.

As time went on, the young bride seemed to have changed her ways and temperament together with her clothes. She was, as we have said, lovely of body, and with her beauty she became so charming, so pleasant and gracious, that rather than the daughter of Giannucolo, rather than the little shepherd-lass, one might have thought her the offspring of some great lord, which was a wonder to everyone who had known her in her former state. She was moreover so obedient to her husband, and so willing to serve, that he considered himself the happiest and the most fortunate man in the world. Toward his subjects, too, Griselda was so kind and gracious, that there was not a man of them who did not love and respect her with profoundest feeling, or failed to pray for her welfare and glory. Indeed, though once they had said that Gualtieri showed little wisdom in

marrying her, they were now unanimous in declaring that he had been a most shrewd and wise man, as none but he could have seen what a gem was hidden under those poor peasant rags. In short, such was Griselda's conduct, that before many months had elapsed, not only in her husband's domain, but everywhere, people spoke of her virtue and good management, turning to Gualtieri's favor everything that had been said when he had taken her to wife.

Not long after she had been with Gualtieri, she conceived, and in due process of time, gave birth to a baby-girl, to her husband's delight. But alas! shortly thereafter a strange whim seized him, to try her patience by long suffering and unbearable cruelties. In the beginning he stung her with words, and pretending grave concern, told her that his subjects were poorly satisfied with her because of her humble origin. They were even less pleased, he continued, that she was bringing children into the world, and were so discontented at the birth of her daughter that they did nothing but complain.

Griselda did not wink a lash at his words, or waver in her meekness. "My lord," she said, "do with me what you deem most becoming your honor and comfort and I shall be content, for I know I am less than the least of them, and that I was not worthy of this estate to which you raised me out of the generosity of your heart."

Gualtieri was exceedingly gratified by her reply, knowing thereby that she had not become puffed up with pride because of the honor she had received from him or others. But not long after he had spoken generally to her of his subjects' resentment at the birth of her daughter, he sent her one of his servants, whom he had previously instructed. The man came to her with a doleful countenance.

"My lady," he said, "if I value my life, I must do what my lord commands. He has ordered me to take this daughter of yours and—." He said no more.

Griselda, seeing the grief on the man's face and hearing his words, and recalling moreover what her husband had told her, understood that the man had been commanded to put the little girl to death. But instantly she took the infant from the cradle, kissed her and said a blessing over her, and then, without revealing on her face the grief that wrung her heart, she laid her in the man's arms.

"Take her," she said, "and do faithfully what has been commanded you by your lord and mine. But do not leave her to be devoured by wild beasts and birds of prey, unless he bade you do that too."

The servant took the child and went to his master to tell him what Griselda had said. Gualtieri, marveling at his wife's constancy of purpose, sent the man to a relative of his at Bologna with the child, praying the good lady to rear her in goodness and modesty, without ever divulging whose daughter she was.

As time went on, Griselda again conceived, and in due time gave birth to a baby-boy, which rejoiced Gualtieri tremendously. Nevertheless, not content with what he had already done, he tortured her more than ever, and coming to her one day looking sorely troubled, "Griselda," he said, "since you brought this son of yours into the world, there's been no living with my subjects, who do nothing but murmur at the thought that a grandson of Giannucolo's will be lord over them after my death. Therefore, I'm afraid that unless I want to be chased out of my realm, I had better do what I did before, and finally put you aside and take another wife."

Griselda listened to him, her soul bowed to patience, and said nothing but, "My lord, think only of contenting yourself and gratifying your pleasure. Have no care for me, for there's nothing gives me joy but what I see pleases you."

A few days later Gualtieri sent for the boy, as he had sent for the girl, and this child he likewise sent to Bologna to be reared, pretending he had had him slain. Again Griselda neither looked nor spoke other than when her daughter had been taken away.

Gualtieri was astonished, and avowed to himself that no other woman in the world could have done what she did. Indeed, had he not witnessed with his own eyes how devoted she had been to the babes during the short time he had been pleased to let her have them, he might have been led to believe she bore up so well out of indifference, though he was convinced she did so out of prudence and constancy.

Meanwhile his subjects, believing he had had his children murdered, were loud in condemnation, thinking him a cruel monster. They pitied Griselda, for never did she make any other answer

to the women who sympathized with her over the loss of her infants in this barbarous fashion, but, "Whatever seems good to him who fathered them must please me too."

Years passed since the birth of the girl, and Gualtieri thought now the time had come for him to put his wife's patience to the extreme test. One day, while many of his people were assembled, he told them that he could no longer bear to have Griselda as his wife. "It was a foolish mistake of my youth," he said, "and therefore I shall try my utmost to obtain a dispensation from His Holiness, so that I may put her away and take another wife."

Bitterly, the worthy men reproached him, but he cut the matter short by saying, "It must be so."

When Griselda heard what was going on, and thought that she would have to go back to her father's hut, perhaps to tend sheep again as in the olden days, while another woman enjoyed the embraces of the man she loved most in the world, she grieved and suffered in the depths of her heart; but as she had suffered the other strokes of fortune, she strengthened herself to suffer this.

Not long after, Gualtieri had some forged documents sent to him from Rome, whereby he pretended to his subjects that the pope had granted him a dispensation to put away Griselda and remarry. Sending for her, he said before a number of his vassals, "Griselda, by a special grant from the pope I am now at liberty to cast you aside and take another wife. My ancestors have always been great nobles and lords of this country; yours have only been peasants. Therefore, I want you to be my wife no longer and to go back to Giannucolo's house, taking with you the marriage portion you brought me, so that I may bring hither the other bride I have found, who is more suited to my rank and station."

Courageously, and with more than feminine strength, Griselda contained the tears rising to her eyes. "My lord," she said, "I have always known my poverty to have been ill-matched to your great station. What I have been to you I have always regarded as a boon from you and Almighty God—a boon that I never claimed entirely for my own as a gift bestowed upon me, but only as a loan. You are pleased to take it back; I must find it good to return it, as I do. Here is the ring with which you took me

to wife: take it. You tell me to carry away with me the marriage-portion I brought you. My lord, you will need no treasurer to pay it, and no sumpter to bear it away, for I have not forgotten you took me naked. If you think it worthy that this body which carried the children engendered by you should be stared at by all, then, my lord, naked I shall go. But I beg you, as the claim of my virginity, which I brought but do not carry away, grant me to take only a shift over my dowry."

Gualtieri, though moved to weeping, steeled himself to look stern and ruthless. "You shall have that shift, then," he said.

Everyone pleaded with him to give her at least a gown, that the woman who had been his wife for more than thirteen years should not be seen to leave his house in poverty and shame. But their prayers were vain. Griselda, however, commended them all to God, and left his house barefoot, with her head uncovered, and only a shift over her body. And so she returned to her father, amid the tears and weeping of all who saw her.

Now Giannucolo, who had never been able to believe that the mighty lord would always keep his daughter as his wife, had been living in daily expectation of this event, and had kept for her the clothes which she had cast off the day Gualtieri took her to wife. He gave them back to Griselda, therefore, and she put them on, devoting herself once more to the humble duties of her father's home, as she had once done, bearing with unbowed spirit the cruel strokes of unfriendly fortune.

After Gualtieri had sent his wife away, he gave his subjects to understand that he had chosen as his new bride one of the daughters of the lords of Panago, and accordingly entered into elaborate preparations for the wedding. Then, sending for Griselda, he said to her:

"The new bride I have chosen will soon be brought home to me, and I'd like to welcome her with due honor on this first visit of hers. You know, Griselda, that I have no women here who are handy at arranging the rooms and doing any of those little things which such a reception requires. You, best of all, know how to add all those gracious touches. Therefore do everything that is to be done, invite whatever ladies you think should come, and wel-

come them as though you were mistress here. After the wedding is over, you may go home again."

No knife-thrust could have hurt Griselda more, for she had not succeeded in laying aside her love for him as she had her good fortune. Nevertheless she replied, "My lord, I am ready to do your service."

In her poor peasant clothes she entered the house which she had left in her shift not long since, and swept and cleaned and arranged the rooms, directing where tapestries were to be hung on the walls and benches placed. With her own hands, she prepared the meats and saw after everything as though she had been the merest scullery-maid. She had no respite until everything had been done to her satisfaction. The work done, she invited all the ladies of the country round, and then awaited the coming of the day appointed for the wedding when, although the clothes she wore were poor and humble, she welcomed the guests with all the courtesy, cheer and graciousness of a lady.

By this time Gualtieri's children, who had been brought up in Bologna by a lady of his family, wife of one of the lords of Panago, had grown, his daughter into a most beautiful girl of twelve, and his son to a lad of some six years. Now Gualtieri had sent a message to the lady's husband, begging him to come to Saluzzo with his son and daughter, and to bring a large and honorable escort with him. "But let no one know who the girl is," he told him. "Say simply you are escorting my new bride."

The Count of Panago did as Gualtieri told him and set out on his journey. Some days later, toward noon, he had arrived with the girl, her brother and a noble company at Saluzzo, where peasant-folk and people from the neighboring hamlets were everywhere gathered to await the coming of their lord's new bride. The ladies who had been invited by Gualtieri came forward to receive her and led her to the great hall, where the tables were spread for the banquet. Then Griselda, in her poor garment, came forward with a happy face to greet her. In vain, the ladies had pleaded with Gualtieri either to allow the poor woman to remain in one of the rooms, or to let her wear one of the gowns that had been hers, so that she would not have to appear so wretched before his guests. Therefore, just as she was, she said to the new bride, "My lady, you are heartily welcome."

Presently, the guests were shown their places at the board and the meats were served. Everyone had eyes for no one but the girl, and avowed Gualtieri had made a change for the better; but most of all, Griselda admired her and the little lad.

When Gualtieri saw that the unheard of situation in no way changed Griselda, of whose keen understanding he had had too many proofs to believe it was stupidity that rendered her so patient, he thought it high time to deliver her from the suffering which he guessed lay hidden beneath her brave reserve.

Summoning her before him, he asked her with a smile in the presence of all his guests, "What do you think of our bride, Griselda?"

"My lord," she answered, "I think very highly of her, and if, as I believe, she is as wise as she is beautiful, I have no doubt you will be the happiest man in the world to have her as a wife. One only prayer I have to ask of you from the bottom of my heart: Do not torment her with the agonies you inflicted upon that other woman who was once yours, for I scarcely think she can bear up under them; for she is young, my lord, and has been tenderly reared, whereas the other had borne continual hardships from her very childhood."

Gualtieri, seeing she was convinced that the girl was to be his wife, and had therefore spoken worthily in every way, bade her sit on his right hand and said, "Griselda, it is now time your long-suffering patience were rewarded, and that all those who have looked upon me as a cruel, iniquitous monster should know that all I did was done with an end in view—namely to teach you to be a wife, and them to know how to choose and keep one. At the same time I strove to procure myself enduring peace while I lived with you—a thing I was afraid I should never have, if I married. It was to this end that I tortured and tormented you in all the ways you have borne. I am convinced now that you can give me the bliss I sought, for never, either by word or deed, have you deviated from my desires. Therefore, Griselda, it is my intention soon to restore to you all at once the joys I took from you at various times, and to reward you with supreme happiness for the many torments I have made you suffer. Take, then, Griselda, take with a joyful soul this girl whom you

think my bride, and this little lad, her brother—take them, your children and mine! Ay, for they are those whom you and many others believed I had cruelly murdered. Take me, your husband, who loves you above everything in the world, for truly, I can well boast there is no man alive who has better reason to be satisfied with his wife!”

With these words, he took her in his arms and kissed her, and rising to his feet, led her, weeping for joy, to where their daughter sat bewildered. They folded the girl tenderly in their arms, and her little brother, too, and relieved her and all the guests of any doubts they may have had.

Presently, the women left their places at table and retired with Griselda to a room apart. More auspiciously than on her marriage, they tore off her miserable frock, dressed her in one of her own rich gowns and escorted her again into the reception hall, splendid as a lady, which, even in her rags, she had never failed to be. Marvelous was her happiness in her children, and great was the joy of the guests at this unexpected turn of events. The festivities waxed more and more joyous, and continued for many days, all men reputing Gualtieri a very wise man, though they condemned as cruel and intolerable the trials he had made his lady endure. But the admiration was all for Griselda, the model of wisdom and patience.

Some days later, the Count of Panago went back to Bologna, and Gualtieri, taking Giannucolo from his toil, elevated him to a rank more becoming his father-in-law; and so the poor fellow ended his remaining years in honor and comfort. Then he bestowed his daughter nobly in marriage, and lived long and happily with Griselda, whom he ever afterwards cherished and held in high esteem.

What more can we say, except that divine spirits may sometimes descend from heaven, even to wretched hovels, just as in kingly palaces others may be born who are fitter to keep swine than to rule over men? What other than Griselda could have suffered dry-eyed, even cheerfully, the harsh, unheard of trials imposed upon her by Gualtieri? In my opinion, it wouldn't have been a bad thing for him if he had come across the sort of woman who, on being turned out of doors in her shift, would have had

some jolly spark so rummage her hide for her that perhaps some good thing might have resulted.

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Dioneo's story over, the women fell to discussing it. For a long time, some took one side and some the other, one blaming this and another praising it, until the king, looking up at the sky and seeing that the sun had already sunk to twilight, addressed them without rising from his seat:

“Accomplished ladies, as I believe all of you must know, human understanding does not simply consist of bearing in mind what is past, or in taking thought of the present; but the ability of employing both to foresee the future has always been deemed the rarest wisdom by men of intellect. To-morrow, as you know, will mark fifteen days since we left Florence. Our purpose in coming here was to have some little relaxation for the sake of our healths and lives, and to forget the gloom and woe and misery that have taken possession of our city since this dreadful plague broke out.

“In my estimation, we have come out of it with flying colors, for even if we have told gay tales, perhaps conducive to lasciviousness, even if we have dined and drunk well, even if we have danced and sung, in short, done things that might lead weak minds to unbecoming deeds, I could detect nothing either in you or in us men to reprehend. Everywhere I saw and perceived nothing but continual seemliness, harmony and innocent camaraderie, which both for your sakes and mine is most gratifying to me.

“Now since each one of us has already had his day in which to enjoy a share of the honor still vested in me, to avoid our continued relations from resulting in boredom, and also to keep anyone from casting a shadow of suspicion on our remaining here so long, I think it would be wise for us to go back where we came from, that is, if it is agreeable to you. There is also something else. Our little group has already come to the attention of several people hereabout, and soon it may become so large that we shall no longer be able to derive any joy of it.

“So then, if you approve of my advice, I'll hold the crown of office until our departure, to-morrow morning, but if you should decide otherwise, I've already chosen my successor.”

A lengthy discussion ensued between the ladies and the youths. Finally, they accepted the king's suggestion as sound and all for the best, and decided to act upon it. He summoned the steward, therefore, instructed him in what was to be prepared for the following morning, and then, rising to his feet, gave them all leave to do as they wished until supper-time. They all rose, following his example, and betook themselves to their various pastimes as usual. When supper-hour came, they fell to, and ate with cheer and relish, and afterwards they danced and played and sang. While Lauretta led the round, the king bade Fiammetta sing a song, which she began in a most pleasing voice:

"If only without jealousy love came
There were no other maid
Would more rejoice than I, whate'er her fame.

If happy youth's first flower
Might please a maiden in her lover, each
Of valor's worth and pride,
Daring and courage, power,
Wisdom and courtesy and gentle speech—
All virtues undenied—
I am the one for whom they are allied
In my sweet lover, made
To be my health and hope and my heart's
flame.

But oh, when I'm aware
That other women are indeed as wise
As I, then much I fear
To think they, too, desiderate and prize
My spirit's pain and cheer.
Then that which of all good I hold most
dear
Causes me be dismayed
And sigh and pine and live in grief and
grievance.

If but my love I knew
As rich in constancy as in his worth,
I should not jealous be.
But then, before one's view
Such great allurements tempt a man on earth,
That trust is misery.
I grieve and weep, and gladly I would flee
This life; for never maid
Can see him, but I give her bitter blame.

I pray each lady fair,
For God's sweet sake, most kindly to refrain
From playing such a turn.
For oh, should any dare
With words, or arts, or blandishments to gain
My harm, or should I learn
Her ill intent, I swear I'd reck and burn
Until I sorely made
Her rue the day she ever brought me
shame."

Fiammetta's song at an end, Dioneo, who was beside her, said with a laugh, "Fiammetta, you would be doing the ladies a favor if you told them who he is, so that they mightn't steal him from you inadvertently, if you're going to fly into such fury as that!" Other songs followed this one, and as by this time the night was well-nigh half spent, they all went to rest at the king's pleasure.

With the first streak of dawn they arose, and guided by their wise king, they made their way toward Florence, whither the steward had already despatched all their bags and baggage. At the church of Santa Maria Novella, from which they had all set out together, the three youths took leave of the seven ladies and then saw after their other pleasures; then, when they were ready, the ladies, too, returned to their homes.

THE AUTHOR'S CONCLUSION

MOST noble ladies, for whose delectation I applied myself to this lengthy task, at last with the help of that divine grace which was granted me more by virtue of your prayers than any merit of mine, I believe I have entirely fulfilled the promise I set out with, when this work was first begun. The Lord be praised, therefore, and you too, dear ladies—and then to give my pen and weary hand a needed rest! But before that, there are some trifling matters which you or others might say, that I should like to dispose of very briefly, taking it for granted that such questions have been raised, although I am cognizant of the fact that a work of this nature should enjoy no more special privileges than any other, as I remember pointing out at the beginning of the fourth day.

There may be some of you who will say that I took too great a liberty in writing these stories, and that I sometimes had ladies tell, and often listen to, things that are not very proper for virtuous women either to relate or hear. I deny this outright. There is nothing so gross that people may not talk about it, provided it is expressed decently, which, I think, I have managed to do. But supposing it were as you say (I wouldn't argue with you for the world, as I'm no match for you), I have plenty of reasons at hand to justify myself. To begin with, if there is anything of the sort in any of the stories, their very character demands it; indeed, if they are examined with an open mind by any reasonable individual, it will be obvious that I couldn't have told them in any other way, unless I had wished to make something entirely different out of them. Even if there should be some little passage or word a little too strong to be stomachied by your virtuous, sainted spinsters who place more stock in words than in deeds, and strive more to create the impression of goodness than to practice it themselves, I should no more be condemned for using them than one would condemn people in general for bandying all day long such words as *hole* and *peg*, *mortar* and *pestle*, *sausage* and

bologna, and all kinds of things of the same import. Besides, why should my pen be given less freedom than is allowed the brush of the painter, who has no qualms at any rate, no just ones—about making Saint Michael strike the serpent with a sword or spear, and Saint George hew at the dragon at whatever part of its anatomy he pleases? But laying that aside, he paints Adam male and Eve female, and even nails to the Cross with one nail or two as he sees fit, the feet of Christ Himself, Who elected to be crucified for the salvation of mankind.

Again, it is quite apparent that these stories are not told in a church, for churchly things should be treated with a pure mind, and spoken of in most reverent terms (although in the history-books of the church itself there are plenty of tales in quite a different strain from those I have written). Nor were they told in schools of philosophy, where propriety is expected of one, as anywhere else. No, they were not told by clerics or philosophers in any church or school, but in gardens and places of recreation, and among youths and maidens who, though young, were sufficiently mature not to be led into wrong courses by such things as stories. Moreover, they were told at a time when it was not thought amiss if even paragons of decency walked about with their drawers over their heads to save their lives. But whatever their nature, these stories, like everything else, can be turned to good or evil ends, depending upon who the listeners are.

Who doesn't know what a boon wine is to the healthy, according to Cinciglione, Scolaio and other authorities, and how dangerous to the sick? Are we to say, then, that wine is bad simply because it is injurious to the fevered? Who doesn't know how useful, indeed, how essential fire is to man? Are we to say that because it burns down houses and wipes out whole hamlets and cities, that it is a curse? Weapons safeguard the welfare of those who desire to live in peace; nevertheless, they often shed blood, not through any evil inherent in them, but through

the wickedness of the men who use them to unworthy ends.

Never has a corrupt mind given any word a pure meaning. Just as virtuous words can do an evil mind no good, others, not so decent, can no more avail to corrupt the well-intentioned than mire can stain the rays of the sun or earth's ugliness obscure the beauties of heaven. What books, what words, what scriptures are holier, worthier, more to be revered than the Holy Bible? But how many have there been who have damned themselves and others through perverse interpretation of it?

Everything is in itself good toward some end, but when used toward evil, it may be in many ways ruinous. So with my stories. Should anyone wish to use them to bad intent or wicked deed, nothing will prevent him, if there is anything in the stories that will permit of being twisted and turned to that purpose. If, on the other hand, any wishes derive use or benefit from them, they will not deny him. Furthermore, they will never be thought otherwise than profitable and proper, if they are read at the proper time and to those for whom they were intended. If there is any woman too busy telling paternosters or making black-pudding and tarts for her pastor, let her leave my stories alone; they don't chase after anyone to be read—although your precious holy ladies often say many a little naughtiness, ay, even practice it.

There may be others of you, dear ladies, who will say there are some stories that would have been better for being omitted. Well and good. However, I could not, indeed, I ought not have written anything but what was told. It was up to the ladies who did the telling; if they had told beautiful tales, I would have written them so. Still, even if, as some people claim, I had been both the writer and the inventor of these stories—which I am not—I tell you point-blank that I should not be at all mortified if they were not all beautiful, as there's no one aside from God, who can create anything well and without flaws. Even Charlemagne, who was the maker of the Paladins, could not create so many of their perfection, that he could muster an army of them alone. Among a multitude of things, the quality varies. There never was a field so well-tended that some burdock, nettle or other rank weed could not

be found mingled with the finest growths. Besides, it would have been foolish for me to have exhausted myself searching out over-exquisite matter and polishing my style, when I was addressing such unschooled young women as most of you are. At any rate, whoever browses among these tales of mine need only leave those that prick and read just those that give her pleasure. All of them, to avoid mistakes, have on their brow what they conceal in their bosoms.

Again, there may be some of you who will say a number of them are too long. To these I answer that it is foolish for anyone who has something else to do, to bother reading stories, even short ones. Although a long time has elapsed from the time I began writing to the present moment, which marks the end of my labors, I have not forgotten that I offered this effort of mine to women with plenty of time on their hands and not to others. To one who reads in order to while away the hours, nothing can be long if it does what is expected of it. Succinctness is far better suited to students, who do not labor to pass the time but to use it to good advantage, than to you, dear ladies, who have as much of it left over as you do not spend in the pleasures of love. Then again, as none of you goes to Athens, Bologna, or Paris to study, it is necessary to expound things at greater length to you than to men who have had their understanding sharpened by learning.

I have no doubt there are still others who may say these stories are overladen with jests and nonsense, and that it is hardly becoming a serious, weighty person like myself to have written in this strain. To them I am much beholden, and I thank them for the solicitude which, in their honest zeal, they are moved to display toward my good fame. My answer to their criticism is this. I confess I am weighty and have been weighed many a time; therefore, for the benefit of those women who have not felt my weight, I insist I am not too heavy; indeed, I am so light that I float on the surface of the water.

Again, considering the fact that the sermons our good friars preach nowadays to admonish us for our sins are in the majority of cases full of jests, jibes and jokes, I thought these trifles would not have been inappropriate in my stories, written as they were to rid

women of melancholy. Still, if for that reason they are made to laugh too much, Jeremiah's Lament, the Passion of the Savior and the Complaint of the Magdalen would cure them of merriment quickly enough.

Who can doubt in the least that some women will be found to say I have an evil-speaking, venomous tongue, because here and there I've written the truth about the friars? We must condone with women who speak in this fashion, since we cannot but believe they are motivated by some just reason. Friars, you know, are good men. They flee from discomfort for the Lord's sake, they thresh when the harvest is done, and they tell no tales. If only they didn't have a hint of a goatish smell, they would be far pleasanter to deal with.

I admit, however, that all things in this world are

not fixed and stable, but are always in a state of change. That may also be true of my tongue which (I have had it not on my own judgment which I never trust in personal matters) a lady of my acquaintance assured me not so long ago was the best and the sweetest in the world. To tell the truth, when she said it there were only a few of the above stories still to be written. I believe then, that these critics are simply talking out of personal animus, so let them be content with what I have said as an answer.

But enough. Let everyone say what she pleases from now on. It is time to have done with words, and to proffer my humble thanks to Him whose aid has guided me to the desired end, after such long toil. And you, fair ladies, remain peacefully in His grace, and think of me if any should find herself at all benefited for having read these tales of mine.

THE TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

TRANSLATIONS of works which, like THE DECAMERON, are apt to be associated in the vulgar mind with a certain hint of the not quite proper, suffer alike from the sin of omission as of commission. Omission, by arbitrarily excising what might give offense to Boccaccio's own "virtuous, sainted spinsters", robs Peter, the author, but does not pay Paul, the reader. Commission, on the other hand, by covert implication and elaborate euphuism defames the one, by making a vice of what was only robust fun, and frustrates the other by leaving him mentally prurient, whereas he would have been the healthier for an honest laugh. *Turpilogium*, in the sense of common indecency, does not exist in Boccaccio, and his innocent rogueries, quaint conceits and penetrating allegories need not even his dictum—that a corrupt mind has never given any word a pure meaning—to defend them from the unhealthy hypocritical.

The aim of the present translator has been neither to omit nor to commit, but to reproduce in our common, understandable idiom the hundred tales as they are, through their kaleidoscopic shiftings, from rollicking, every-day fun to high, pure morality—for as Boccaccio's Florentines were great fun-makers, livers and lovers, they were also great moralists. Everything, therefore, has been given in this translation, nothing has been omitted, and nothing added that was not implicit. Where a literal rendering gives the author's intent, literal translation is employed. Where, for the understanding of some delicious roguery, the original *double entente* may be obtained only by an imaginative transliteration, as in the word *priemere* (Day I: Story 4), instead of the

dead *press*, or the figurative *mortify*, the synonymous *lie heavily* is given, thereby making a witty tale hang where, in previous translations, no tale hung before.

Again, lifeless renderings of words no longer in dictionaries are eschewed by consulting the ever-living and ever-current book of common speech. There is the word *galle*, for instance (Day VIII: Story 6), which one translator renders *boluses* and another, faithfully following the wrong cue, *pills*. Boccaccio describes these boluses or pills as *belle galle*—and where, except perhaps in a catalogue of pharmacopeia, were such medicinal treats ever qualified as fine, or delicious? Again, these ginger-boluses are bought by the pound, to be distributed, with wine, to a group of men. Even in those days of Gargantuan gullets, it would have been a generous dose to buy a pound of pills at the *speziale's*, the druggist's, or spice-dealer's. It was this gentleman's calling that led the former translators astray, as though then, as well as now, one could not get at the *speziale's*, *belle galle*, which would not be pills. In a recent visit to Florence, this translator also went to a *speziale's* and also bought delicious *gallette*, but they were nothing more nor less than little cakes, with or without frosting, the culinary descendants, perhaps, of Boccaccio's own. Again, to convince the scholarly that Bruno performed his ordeal with cakes and not with boluses, which according to the story were not gulped down but masticated, the dictionary to-day has the word *galletta*, a biscuit. A long instance for such a trifling point, perhaps, but it is typical in little of what Boccaccio has suffered at large, and which the present translator has sought to remedy.

F. W.

SUMMARY OF THE STORIES

THE FIRST DAY

- The First Story* . . . Master Ciappelletto dupes a holy friar with a trumped up confession and dies; and though he had been a very wicked man in life, in death he was deemed a saint and called Saint Ciappelletto. . . . 11
- The Second Story* . . . Abraham the Jew, urged by Jehannot de Chevigny, visits the court of Rome, and witnessing the loose life of the clergy becomes a Christian. . . . 17
- The Third Story* . . . Melchizedek the Jew avoids a trap set for him by Saladin, by a parable about three rings. . . . 19
- The Fourth Story* . . . A monk who had fallen into a sin deserving of severe punishment, cleverly reproached that same fault in his abbot and so avoided its penalty. . . . 20
- The Fifth Story* . . . The Marquise of Monferrato checks the mad passion of the King of France by means of a dinner of hens and certain pretty words. . . . 22
- The Sixth Story* . . . With a witty saying an honest man confounds the wicked hypocrisy of religious orders. . . . 23
- The Seventh Story* . . . Bergamino frankly condemns a strange miserliness that had come over Candella Scala, by telling him about Primasso and the Abbot of Cluny. . . . 24
- The Eighth Story* . . . Guglielmo Borsiere chastises the stinginess of Erminio de' Grimaldi with some choice words. . . . 27
- The Ninth Story* . . . The King of Cyprus, reprimanded by a Gascon lady, turns from a craven to a man of character. . . . 28
- The Tenth Story* . . . Master Alberto of Bologna courteously turns tables on a woman who had sought to shame him for being in love with her. 28

THE SECOND DAY

- The First Story* . . . Martellino, pretending to be a cripple, makes believe he is healed over the body of Saint Heinrich. His trumpery is discovered and he is beaten; then captured, and in danger of being hanged by the neck, he eventually escapes. 33
- The Second Story* . . . After falling into the hands of robbers, Rinaldo d'Asti finds his way to the town of Guglielmo, where he is taken in by a widow. He gets back all his goods and returns home none the worse for his adventure. 35
- The Third Story* . . . Three young men are facing poverty, having squandered their inheritance, when a nephew of theirs, journeying home in great discouragement, meets a young abbot and finds him to be the King of England's daughter in disguise. She marries him and restores his uncles' losses, setting them up in plenty once more. 39
- The Fourth Story* . . . Landolfo Ruffolo is impoverished, and becomes a corsair. He is captured by the Genoese, shipwrecked, and saves himself by floating on a chest full of precious jewels. At Corfu he is rescued by a woman, and then returns home rich. . . . 43
- The Fifth Story* . . . Andreuccio of Perugia, coming to Naples to purchase horses, has a number of serious mishaps in the course of one night, but escapes them all and returns home with a ruby. 45
- The Sixth Story* . . . Lady Beritola, after losing both her sons, is discovered on a desert island with two kids, and is taken to Lunigiana. There, one of her sons, in service with the lord of the land, is caught lying with his daughter and is clapped into prison. In the meantime, Sicily rebels under the rule of King Charles. Lady Beritola recognizes her son, who marries his lord's daughter; then his brother is found, and all are restored to their former prestige. . . . 52

The Seventh Story . . . The Sultan of Babylon sends one of his daughters to be married to the King of Algarve. Within the space of four years she comes, through strange incidents, into the hands of nine different men in various places. Finally she is brought back to her father a virgin, and goes to marry the King of Algarve, as she had set out to do in the first place. . . . 58

The Eighth Story . . . The Count of Antwerp, falsely accused, goes into exile and leaves his two children in different parts of England. On returning incognito, he finds them in good circumstances. Then, enlisting as groom in the army of the King of France, he is proved innocent and restored to his former dignity. . . . 68

The Ninth Story . . . Bernabo of Genoa, tricked by Ambrogiuolo, loses his wager and orders his guiltless wife to be slain. She escapes, and disguised as a man, goes into service with the Sultan. Here she meets the trickster and brings her husband to Alexandria where the scoundrel is punished. Then, in her own clothes, she returns to Genoa with her husband and much wealth. 76

The Tenth Story . . . Paganino of Monaco kidnaps the wife of Ricciardo da Chinzica who, on learning where she is, makes friends with Paganino and asks to have her back. Paganino consents, if the woman is willing; but she refuses to go home, and when Ricciardo dies, she becomes the wife of Paganino. . . . 81

THE THIRD DAY

The First Story . . . Masetto da Lamporecchio pretends dumbness, and is engaged as gardener for a convent of nuns, who hasten to lie with him. 88

The Second Story . . . A groom lies with the wife of King Agilulf, who, on discovering it, finds the man and cuts off a lock of his hair. The shorn man clips the hair of the rest of the servants, and so escapes punishment. . . . 91

The Third Story . . . A lady, in love with a gentleman, succeeds in gaining her ends by means of a sanctimonious confession to a solemn friar, who becomes her tool without knowing it. . . . 94

The Fourth Story . . . Felice teaches Brother Puccio how to gain blessedness, by performing the penance he sets him; and while Puccio is busy at it, Felice has a good time with the pious man's wife. . . . 98

The Fifth Story . . . Il Zima gives Francesco Vergellesi one of his riding-horses, and, in exchange, gains leave to speak to his wife. As she makes no reply, he speaks for her, and the desired effect follows upon his answers. . . . 101

The Sixth Story . . . Ricciardo Minutolo, in love with Catella, the wife of Filippello Fighinolfi, works upon her jealousy, and pretending Filippello has an appointment with his own wife at a house of assignation, contrives to get Catella there, who thinks she has been with her husband, but discovers it was Ricciardo. . . . 103

The Seventh Story . . . Tedaldo, after a misunderstanding with his mistress, leaves Florence, whence he returns some time later, disguised as a pilgrim. He talks to her and makes her aware of her error, delivers her husband, who had been condemned to death on the grounds of having murdered him, and makes peace between him and his brothers. Then he prudently enjoys himself with his lady. . . . 107

The Eighth Story . . . Ferondo is buried for dead, after swallowing a certain powder. He is later taken out of the tomb by the abbot (who in the meantime enjoys his wife), and is held in confinement, believing himself in purgatory. Then, when he is brought to life again, he brings up as his own, the child that the abbot had begot on his wife. . . . 115

The Ninth Story . . . Gillette of Narbonne cures the King of France of a fistula; she asks as a reward to marry Bertrand of Roussillon, who goes through the ceremony against his will and then leaves for Florence in a scornful temper. There he courts a young woman, and imagining he is with her, lies with his own wife, who bears him two sons. Thereupon, he loves her and restores her to her rightful place. . . . 120

The Tenth Story . . . Alibech becomes a recluse, and Rustico, a monk, teaches her how to put the devil back in hell. Then, when she is taken away from Thebais, she becomes the wife of Neherbale. . . . 124

THE FOURTH DAY

The First Story . . . Tancred, Prince of Salerno, has his daughter's lover murdered, and sends her his heart in a golden goblet; she pours poisoned water over it, drains it, and dies. . . . 132

The Second Story . . . Brother Alberto gives a certain woman to understand that the Angel Gabriel is in love with her, and lies with her various times in his own shape. Later he jumps out of the window of her house for fear of her in-laws, and seeks refuge in the hut of a man who leads him to the square the following day, disguised as a wild-man. There he is recognized, rescued by his friars, and imprisoned. . . . 137

The Third Story . . . Three young men, in love with three sisters, elope to Crete, where the eldest girl slays her lover in a fit of jealousy. The second sister gives herself to the Duke of Crete, to save her from death, but is killed by her lover, who runs off with the rescued girl. As a result, the remaining pair are accused and put into prison, where they admit their guilt, for fear of punishment; bribing the guard they flee to Rhodes and die in poverty. . . . 142

The Fourth Story . . . Gerbino attacks a ship belonging to the King of Tunis, despite the safe conduct given by his grandfather, King Guglielmo of Sicily, in order to abduct the King of Tunis' daughter, who is slain before his eyes by the ship's crew. Gerbino slaughters them, and is later beheaded. . . . 145

The Fifth Story . . . Isabetta's brothers slay her lover; he appears to her in a dream, and shows her where he is buried. She secretly unearths the head, and sets it in a pot of basil. As she weeps over it for a long time each day, the brothers take

it away from her, and she dies for grief soon after. . . . 147

The Sixth Story . . . Andreola, in love with Gabriotto, tells him a dream she has had, whereat he tells her another and then dies suddenly in her arms. While she is carrying him to his house, with the help of her maid, she is seized by the police, and she confesses how the death occurred. The provost, struck by her beauty, wishes to take her by force, but she struggles against him. The affair finally comes to her father's hearing, and when she is proved innocent, he has her set free, whereupon she takes leave of the world and becomes a nun. . . . 149

The Seventh Story . . . Simona loves Pasquino. Together, they are lying in a garden, when he rubs his teeth with a sage leaf and dies. Simona is arrested, and when she explains to the judge how Pasquino met his death, and rubs another sage leaf against her teeth, she also falls down dead. . . . 153

The Eighth Story . . . Girolamo, in love with Salvestra, goes to Paris at his mother's entreaties, and on his return finds the girl married. Secretly entering her house, he dies by her side, and when he is carried to the church for burial, Salvestra falls dead beside him. . . . 155

The Ninth Story . . . William of Roussillon gives his wife the heart of William Guardetang to eat, whom he had slain because she loved him; when she discovers it, she flings herself headlong from a high window to the ground, perishes, and is buried with her lover. . . . 157

The Tenth Story . . . A surgeon's wife, believing her unconscious lover dead, hides him in a chest, which is stolen, gallant and all, and taken home by two moneylenders. The lover regains his senses and is taken for a thief, whereupon the lady's maid tells the court she herself had hidden him in the chest that was stolen by the usurers. He escapes the gallows and the usurers are fined for having made away with the chest. . . . 159

THE FIFTH DAY

The First Story . . . Cymon gains wisdom with the coming of love, and abducts his lady Iphigenia, at sea. He is imprisoned in Rhodes, where he is delivered by Lysimachus, and together both carry off Iphigenia and Cassandra, on their wedding day. They go to Crete, where they marry the ladies, and then are called back home. 165

The Second Story . . . Costanza, who is in love with Martuccio Gomito, hears that he is dead, and getting into a little boat in her keen despair, is drifted by the wind to Susa. In Tunis, she finds her lover alive, and reveals herself to him. Then Martuccio, who has become a favorite courtier for the advice he had given the king, marries her and returns home with her in great state. 170

The Third Story . . . Pietro Boccamazza, eloping with Agnolella, falls in among thieves. The girl, fleeing through a wood, happens upon a castle, but Pietro is captured. He escapes from the thieves and eventually comes to the very castle where Agnolella found refuge. There he marries her, and returns with her to Rome. . . . 173

The Fourth Story . . . Ricciardo Manardi, discovered by Lizio da Valbona with his daughter, makes her his wife and so lives in peace and harmony with his father-in-law. . . . 177

The Fifth Story . . . Guidotto da Cremona leaves his small daughter in charge of Giacomini da Pavia, and dies. Both Giannole di Severino and Minghino di Mingole fall in love with her at Faenza, and quarrel because of her. At last, she is discovered to be Giannole's sister, and is given in marriage to Minghino. . . . 179

The Sixth Story . . . Gianni of Procida, discovered with a young girl, with whom he had long been in love, but who had been given to King Frederick, is bound with her to a stake and condemned to be burned; he is recognized by Ruggeri dell'Oria, saved from death, and given the girl in marriage. . . . 182

The Seventh Story . . . Teodoro, in love with Violante, the daughter of his master Amerigo, gets

her with child and is condemned to the gallows. While he is being led to death and scourged on the way, he is recognized and delivered by his father, and later married to Violante . . . 185

The Eighth Story . . . Nastagio degli Onesti loves a lady of the Traversari family, and squanders his riches for her sake without having his love requited. At his friends' insistence, he goes to Chiassi, where he has a vision of a knight giving chase to a lady, slaying her, and throwing her body to be devoured by two hounds. Thereupon, he invites his family and the people of his beloved to a banquet, where the hard-hearted damsel sees the phantom lady torn to pieces. Fearing a similar fate, she takes Nastagio for her husband. . . . 188

The Ninth Story . . . Federigo degli Alberighi languishes in unrequited love for a lady. Wasting his goods in gallantry to win her favor, he is so reduced in circumstances that he has only a falcon left, which he serves her at dinner, for lack of other fare, when she comes to his house. Learning of his sacrifice, she suffers a change of heart, marries him, and makes him rich once more. . . . 191

The Tenth Story . . . Pietro di Vinciolo goes out to dine, and his wife invites a young spark to be with her. Pietro unexpectedly returns, and she quickly hides her lover under a chicken-coop. When Pietro relates how, in the house of Ercolano, with whom he was dining, a gallant was found, whom his wife had concealed, Pietro's lady is loud in condemnation of her. Suddenly a donkey accidentally steps on the fingers of the fellow under the chicken-coop, causing him to cry out with pain. Pietro, finding him there, discovers his wife's trick, but he eventually comes to terms with her, for his own wicked ends. 194

THE SIXTH DAY

The First Story . . . A gentleman offers to take Mistress Oretta on horseback with a story, but he tells it so poorly, that she begs to be allowed to go on foot again. . . . 206

The Second Story . . . Cisti the baker brings an indiscreet request to the attention of Messer Geri Spina, by a clever retort. . . . 206

The Third Story . . . Nonna de' Pulci silences the Bishop of Florence by a ready retort to his indecent remark. . . . 208

The Fourth Story . . . Chichibio, Currado Gianfigliuzzi's cook, turns his master's wrath to laughter by a ready excuse, and avoids the punishment in store for him. . . . 209

The Fifth Story . . . Forese da Rabatta and Giotto the painter come together from Mugello and tease each other on their disreputable appearance. 210

The Sixth Story . . . Michele Scalza, by proving to certain young men that the Baronci family is the oldest and best in the whole world, or Maremma, wins himself a supper. . . . 211

The Seventh Story . . . Filippa, called to judgment by her husband, on being found with a lover, avoids the penalty by a prompt and pleasing defense, and causes the law to be modified. 212

The Eighth Story . . . Fresco advises his niece not to look at her own image if, as she said, she was annoyed by the sight of unpleasant people. 214

The Ninth Story . . . Guido Cavalcanti civilly rebukes certain Florentine gentlemen who had come upon him in his meditations. . . . 214

The Tenth Story . . . Friar Onion promises to show some peasants a feather from the wings of Angel Gabriel. Finding coals in its place, he claims they are of the brazier on which Saint Lawrence was roasted. . . . 215

THE SEVENTH DAY

The First Story . . . Gianni Lotteringhi hears a knock at his door in the dead of night, and rouses his wife, who makes him believe it a ghost. They proceed to exorcise it, by a certain charm, and the knocking ceases. . . . 223

The Second Story . . . Peronella conceals her lover in a cask, when her husband returns home unexpectedly. On his telling her that he has sold the cask, she replies she had already struck a good

bargain on it, with the man who had gone into it, to see whether it was sound. The lover promptly jumps out, makes Peronella's husband scrape the cask clean, and then has him deliver it to his house. . . . 226

The Third Story . . . Friar Rinaldo goes to bed with his gossip, and when her husband surprises them in the bedroom, pretends he is performing a charm to rid his godson of worms. . . . 228

The Fourth Story . . . Tofano locks his wife out one night. When she can not succeed in being let in, despite prayers and entreaties, she pretends to jump headlong into a well, but throws in a large stone instead. Tofano runs thither from the house, whereupon she steals in, locks him out and rails at him from the window. . . . 231

The Fifth Story . . . A jealous man, disguised as a priest, listens to his wife's confession, in which she pretends she is in love with a priest who comes to her every night. Then, while the jealous husband secretly guards the door, she admits a lover of hers through the roof and dallies with him. . . . 233

The Sixth Story . . . While Mistress Isabella is entertaining Leonetto, she receives an unexpected call from a certain Messer Lambertuccio, who is in love with her. Suddenly her husband comes home, whereupon she sends Lambertuccio out of the house brandishing a knife; subsequently, her husband accompanies Leonetto as far as his door. . . . 237

The Seventh Story . . . Ludovico declares his love to Beatrice, his mistress, whereupon she sends Egano, her husband, into the garden disguised in her clothes, and lies with her lover, who later goes into the garden and gives Egano a good drubbing. . . . 238

The Eighth Story . . . The wife of a very jealous man ties a piece of string to her big toe and so knows when her lover comes to visit her. The husband discovers the ruse, and while he is busy chasing the lover, the wife puts another woman in bed to take her place. The husband beats the substitute, cuts off her hair, and runs to fetch his wife's

brothers, who find his accusations apparently untrue, and revile him for his pains. . . . 241

The Ninth Story . . . Lydia, the wife of Nicostratus, takes a fancy to Pyrrhus, who asks three things of her as proof of her true love. She accomplishes them all, sporting with him, as well, under her husband's nose, and making Nicostratus believe that what he saw was an illusion of the senses. . . . 245

The Tenth Story . . . Two men of Siena are both in love with the same woman, who is related to one of them, through his being godfather to her child. This man dies, and keeping his promise to his friend, returns and tells him what sort of life is led in the other world. . . . 250

THE EIGHTH DAY

The First Story . . . Gufardo borrows a sum of money from Gasparruolo, in order to give it to the latter's wife, Ambrogia, for the privilege of lying with her; later, in the presence of Ambrogia, he tells her husband that he returned the money to her, which she cannot but admit. . . . 255

The Second Story . . . The village-priest of Varlungo enjoys Mistress Belcolore, and leaves her his tabard as a surety; he then borrows her mortar, and on sending it back, demands his good tabard which he had left her in pledge, whereupon she returns it with pithy words. . . . 256

The Third Story . . . Calandrino, Bruno and Buffalmacco scour the banks of the Mugnone in search of a stone called heliotrope. Calandrino imagines he has found it, and returns home loaded down with all kinds of stones. His wife scolds him for coming home so late, whereupon he gives her a beating and then tells his companions what they knew better than he. . . . 259

The Fourth Story . . . The rector of the church of Fiesole is in love with a woman who does not care for him, and thinking he is in bed with her, lies with a slattern of hers until the lady's brothers come in with the bishop, and expose him. . . . 263

The Fifth Story . . . Three merry scalawags pull down a judge's pantaloons, while he is on the bench hearing his cases. . . . 266

The Sixth Story . . . Bruno and Buffalmacco steal Calandrino's porker, and then persuade him to try to get it back by means of an ordeal of ginger-cakes and wine. One after the other, they give him two dog-biscuits prepared with aloes, by means of which Calandrino apparently stands accused. Thereupon, they compel him to pay them a bribe, by the threat of telling everything to his wife. . . . 268

The Seventh Story . . . A scholar falls in love with a widow, who has another gallant. She makes the new lover spend a whole winter's night waiting for her in the snow; but he succeeds, by his cunning, in having her remain naked on a tower all during a hot July day, at the mercy of the sun, mosquitoes and hornets. . . . 271

The Eighth Story . . . Spinelloccio and Zeppa are close friends. The former lies with the wife of the latter, who discovers it and contrives to shut the offender in a chest. There, while Spinelloccio is imprisoned, he dallies over his head with the former's wife. . . . 282

The Ninth Story . . . Master Simon, the doctor, inveigled by Bruno and Buffalmacco to go to a certain place one night, on a pretense of being initiated into a secret band of rangers, is thrown by Buffalmacco into a cess-pool, and left to get out of it as best he can. . . . 284

The Tenth Story . . . A Sicilian woman cunningly cheats a merchant out of the profits he made in Palermo; but the man, pretending to have returned with more valuable merchandise than before, borrows money from her and leaves her nothing but water and oakum in exchange. 292

THE NINTH DAY

The First Story . . . Francesca is besieged by the attentions of two gallants, Rinuccio and Alessandro; but as she loves neither, she gets rid of both by imposing on one the task of getting into a tomb, and on the other, of carrying him out.

They cannot follow her command to the full, and so she is freed of their importunities. 301

The Second Story . . . A lady-abbess gets up hurriedly in the dark, to catch one of her nuns in bed with a lover, according to the accusations made to her. She herself had been in bed with a priest, and thinking to throw her wimple about her head, puts on her lover's breeches instead. The accused nun sees the pantaloons and brings them to her attention, whereupon she is absolved, and is free to lie with her lover. . . . 304

The Third Story . . . At the suggestion of Bruno, Buffalmacco and Nello, Dr. Simon makes Calandrino believe he is pregnant, as a result of which the patient gives them capons and money for medicines, recovering in the end without being delivered. . . . 306

The Fourth Story . . . Cecco Fortarrigo gambles at Buonconvento and loses all his goods as well as the money of his master, Cecco Angiolieri, whom he pursues in his shirt. Then, accusing Angiolieri of having robbed him, he has him captured by some peasants, and putting on his clothes, rides away on his horse, leaving the poor fellow almost naked. . . . 308

The Fifth Story . . . Calandrino becomes infatuated with a young woman, whereupon Bruno writes him a charm, at the touch of which she is bound to follow him. Mistress Tessa surprises him, and he is made to pay the piper. . . . 310

The Sixth Story . . . Two young men spend a night at an inn, where one lies with the daughter of the host, while the host's wife inadvertently goes to bed with the other. But the one who had slept with the girl, gets into bed with her father, and tells him everything, believing him to be his companion. They quarrel, whereupon the host's wife, seeing what it is all about, slips into bed with her daughter, and restores harmony by explaining away the misunderstanding. . . . 314

The Seventh Story . . . Talano di Molese dreams that a wolf tears his wife's throat and face. He warns her, but she does not heed him, and the vision comes to pass. . . . 316

The Eighth Story . . . Biondello plays Ciacco a trick which the latter adroitly returns, by having him soundly beaten. . . . 317

The Ninth Story . . . Two youths go to Solomon for advice—one seeking to know how to gain the love of his fellow-men, and the other how to cure his wife of her perversity. To the first he answered, "Love!" and to the other, "Go to Goose-
Bridge!" . . . 319

The Tenth Story . . . Brother John, at the request of his friend Pietro, performs a charm to transform his wife into a mare; but when the priest is about to attach the mare's tail, Peter says he will have none of it, and so ruins the spell. . . . 322

THE TENTH DAY

The First Story . . . A knight in the service of the King of Spain thinks himself ill-rewarded for his pains, whereupon the king gives him certain proof that Fortune, and not he, is to blame, and rewards him with royal munificence. . . . 325

The Second Story . . . Ghino da Tacco captures the Abbot of Cluny, cures him of stomach-trouble and then lets him go. Back at the court of Rome, the abbot reconciles Ghino to Pope Boniface who makes him a Prior of the Hospitals. 326

The Third Story . . . Mithridanes, envying Nathan his reputation for courtesy and generosity, sets out to kill him. Unknown to him, he meets Nathan, to whom he reveals his intention. Nathan then tells him how to accomplish his end, and goes to a wood to meet his murderer. Mithridanes recognizes him, and ashamed of his fault, becomes his friend. . . . 329

The Fourth Story . . . Messer Gentile de' Carisendi, on his return from Modona, delivers his beloved from the tomb where she had been laid for dead. Under his ministrations, she revives and is brought to bed of a boy, and Messer Gentile restores her and the infant to Nicoluccio Caccianimico, her husband. . . . 332

The Fifth Story . . . Dianora requires Ansaldo to give her a garden that in the month of January would be as beautiful as in May. With the help of a

magician, to whom he pledges himself for a large sum, Ansaldo grants his lady's wish. Dianora's husband, learning what has happened, gives her permission to grant herself to her lover, who, hearing of the man's generosity, releases her from her word. At that the magician, too, relieves Ansaldo of his pledge and refuses to accept any reward for his pains. . . . 336

The Sixth Story . . . King Charles the First, called the Victorious, falls in love with a young girl but, ashamed of his folly, gives her and her twin-sister away in honorable marriage. . . . 338

The Seventh Story . . . King Pedro, upon hearing how fervently he is beloved by the pining Lisa, comes to comfort her in her sick bed; then, marrying her to a noble youth, he kisses her on the brow, and declares himself from then on her knight. . . . 341

The Eighth Story . . . Sophronia, believing herself married to Gisippus, discovers she is the wife of Titus Quintius Fulvus, and goes with him to Rome where Gisippus later arrives in dire poverty. He is under the impression Titus has scorned him, and accuses himself of having murdered a man, so that he may be put to death. Titus recognizes him, and to save his friend, takes the guilt upon himself. The true murderer, however, on beholding Titus' noble action, gives himself up, whereupon they are all set free by Octavianus.

Later Titus gives his sister in marriage to Gisippus, and shares all his goods with him. 344

The Ninth Story . . . Saladin, traveling incognito, enjoys the hospitality of Torello. Soon a crusade is undertaken and Torello sets out upon it, enjoining his wife not to marry again until a year is past. He is captured by the Saracens, and because of his excellence in training hawks, comes to the notice of Saladin who recognizes him, makes himself known, and loads him with honors. Torello suddenly falls sick, and by virtue of magic arts is transported overnight to Pavia, where during the ceremony of his wife's remarriage she knows him and they both go home together. . . . 353

The Tenth Story . . . The Marquis of Saluzzo, urged into matrimony by the importunities of his subjects, but resolved to choose his wife for himself, marries Griselda, a peasant's daughter, and has two children by her, both of whom he pretends to have put to death. Then, giving Griselda to understand that he has tired of her and married again, he brings his daughter home as though she were his new wife, and turns Griselda out in her shift. But when he finds that she has been constant in the stress of all her suffering, he takes her home again, shows her their children already grown, and loves her more than ever, he and his subjects honoring her from then on as their lady. . . . 362

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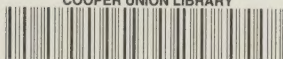
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